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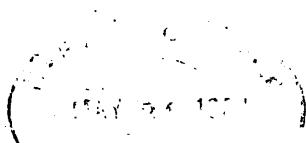
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Ballads and Poems.

THE LOST DRAVE OF DUNBAR.

The incident on which the following ballad is founded occurred towards the close of the sixteenth century, at which period Dunbar was the most important fishing station in Scotland. The Drave is the local designation of the herring fleet.

WHERE the rich lap of Lothian sinks
Down to the widening Forth,
Dunbar looks from its craggy brinks
To the fierce waves of the north—
A drowsy burgh, dim and old,
And clothed with legends manifold,
Gleams of a fiery past and fiercer life,
And lingering echoes of the vanished strife,
And shadowy presences, whose fame
Tosses like tempestuous flame,
Ensanguined with the hue of crime,
Upon the beacon heights of time ;
Cromwell and Mary, and in dimmer light,
That ill starred monarch in distracted flight
Breathless from Bannockburn, upon whose rear
Fierce Douglas hung, and shook his vengeful spear.
But leave unsung the lofty doom,
The stormy splendour and the gloom,
And choose a humbler tale,

That like a voice of wail,
Borne faintly from the sea,
Floats down through centuries three.

It was, when summer sheds the bloom,
And corn is in the ear,
When the Lothian farmer whets the hook,
And brews the harvest cheer,
And the herring drave sails forth at eve
From the harbour of Dunbar,
To reap the harvest of the wave
By the light of moon and star.

The sea was calm, the sky was clear,
Red rose the Sabbath dawn,
The nets upon the beach were spread,
The boats on shore were drawn ;
And the fishers gazed in idle mood
Across the harbour wall,
And mourned a week of weary toil
And ever an empty haul.

And some there were, who shook sage heads,
And well the cause could tell,
It was the sail's new-fangled trim,
It was the new kirk bell.
Some to the withered beldame's hut
Their scowling glances turned,
And cursed the provost's lack of zeal,
That left the witch unburned.

But lo ! a change—a charm that makes
Each heart leap hot and fast,

Hands point, and bonnets wave, ahoy !
Ahoy ! the shoal at last !
See yonder where the thickening waves
With oily glimmer shine !
See where the busy wings and beaks
Are dipping in the brine !

“Heave down the boats, heaven sends the chance
Let fool and coward stay !”
So ran the cry, and not a voice
Breathed counsel or delay.
A thousand hands tug at the boats
With a ringing “yo, heave ho !”
When o’er the din the Sabbath bell
Pealed solemnly and slow.

Dread as the warning voice of heaven
Upon their ears it rung,
Down sank the straining arm, the cheer
Died on the shouting tongue.
But, like a fierce flame beaten down
One moment by the blast,
So sank the tumult at the sound
And rose again as fast.

For eyes that fell at first abashed
On other eyes looked round,
And caught incitement from their glance
And fanned the fire they found.
“The minister shall have his tithe,
The kirk shall have her due,
And if a penance must be done,
Why, penance we will do.”

“Heave down !” the keels grate o’er the sand ;
But, ere the tide they reach,
A swift form hurries through the crowd,
And stands upon the beach.
Loose float his sable robes, loose float
His locks of reverend grey,
His withered hand he lifts, and cries
“Remember Sabbath day.”

As when the prophet from the mount
Burst on his people’s sight,
And flashed upon them from his brows
Insufferable light,
That smote to silence and to shame
The heathen song and dance,
So shrank the startled fishermen
Before the preacher’s glance.

“Back to your homes, lest heaven in wrath
Rain down a fiery shower,
Back, lest the earth beneath your feet
Should open to devour !
And gather to the house of God
Where haply He will hear
If ye bow down before His face
In penitence and fear.”

“And I, even I, whose flock ye are,
Though now ye madly stray,
Will wrestle with the Lord, that He
May wash your sin away.
Yea ! I will bear you to His throne
And vehemently sue

That He would blot me from His book
To purchase peace for you."

Then, as the deep voice died away
Arose a clamour wild,
A chorus shrill of sob and shriek,
The wail of wife and child,
And mothers grey and maidens fair
That wept and warned and pled,
But sorest was the children's cry
Of dim unreasoning dread.

In vain ! the fishermen looked forth
Upon the teeming bay,
Rife with the hovering wings, that showed
The rich and fleeting prey.
The fierce greed kindled in their eyes,
And their hearts grew like the stone,
And they spurned the man of God away
And scoffed their kindred's moan.

The preacher cried a bitter cry,
And plucked his hoary hair,
And with the weeping women turned
To seek the house of prayer.
The boats rode out upon the tide,
And the sails rose broad and high,
Till like a long dark wall they stood
Against the morning sky.

Half sobbed, half sung, the morning psalm
Flowed faintly to its close,
And breaking from his burdened heart,

The preacher's voice arose.
And now it trembled and implored
In low beseeching tone,
And now, with passionate appeal
It stormed Heaven's mercy throne.

Even while he spoke, a shadow crept
Throughout the sacred hall,
And blotted out the golden light
Of morning on the wall.
And a breeze came like a brushing wing
That shook the window pane,
A wing that strikes, and swooping past
Returns to strike again.

And ever deeper grew the shade,
And louder blew the blast,
And, white amid the growing gloom
All faces looked aghast.
And fitfully the preacher's voice
Rung like the broken wail
Of one whose drowning cry is heard
In pauses of the gale.

Then rushed a streak of arrowy flame
With momentary flare,
And roof and wall, and every face
Shook in the quivering glare.
And quicker than the thunder peal
Behind the flashing fire,
With crash and clatter on the roof
Down rushed the shattered spire.

Up sprung the startled worshippers,
And shrieking, forth they fled,
And through the rain, and through the blast,
Fast to the shore they sped.
The earth might rock beneath their feet,
The heavens might rend above,
One fear subdued all other fears—
The pang of human love.

On a green hill beside the shore
There stands a pillar grey,
And they, who journey by Dunbar,
May mark it there to-day.
And there the wives and children stood,
As all the tales agree,
To watch the sails of those they loved
Returning from the sea.

As from the swathing smoke that wraps
Some far-resounding fight,
Loose steeds, with wildly tossing manes,
Rush forth in frantic flight ;
The surges from the sullen mist
Come rolling high and hoar,
And lashed the ledges, spouting foam,
That girt the craggy shore.

And haggard eyes, bedimmed with tears,
And blind with briny sleet,
Watched there without the watcher's hope,
For the returning fleet.
The wave might spare, the wind might waft
Their barks along the bay,

But the black rocks stood like hungry teeth
In merciless array.

At last—at last, like broken wings
Half lifted from the tide,
How few of all that sailed that morn
Come scattered far and wide ;
A moment on the surf they whirl,
Then vanish from the gaze,
Like sere leaves scattered from the hand
Amid the shrivelling blaze.

Then wildly rose the women's cry
As they tore their streaming hair,
And dashed their brows upon the stone
In infinite despair.
And if ye journey to Dunbar
And see that pillar lone,
Its name, if haply ye should ask,
Is still the Knocking Stone.

THE DOUGLAS LARDER.

HOMEWARD from the chase Lord Clifford
Rode at eve through Douglas Dale,
Clifford by the grace of Edward,
Lord of all that pleasant vale.
And he hummed a knightly ditty,
Ambling at an easy pace,
As he gazed on wood and valley
Good for pasture and for chase.

- "By St. George, no shire of England
Holds a fairer glade," he swore,
"Not an earldom has king Edward
In his gift, that suits me more ;
Though I hold it, as I won it,
By the might of my good sword,
Which shall ever guard my title
Spite of Scotland's proudest Lord.
Ho ! thou sullen, swarthy churl
Passing with scant reverence by,
Whither now, and with what laden,
Speak, man, hast thou no reply ?"
—"Boughs of yew and willow these are
From the forest, newly shorn,
That the church be fitly furnished
On the near Palm Sunday morn."—
- "See that thou be there," said Clifford,
"For thou sorely lackest grace,
In thine eye a proud fire flashes,
Suiting ill a rank so base."
Onward then he rode, while darkly
Flushed that peasant's cheek with ire,
"Thou shalt find me there," he murmured,
"Closer than thou shalt desire."
Morning of Palm Sunday brightened
Fresh and fair in breezy March,
And the throstle fluted sweetly
Perched upon the tasseled larch ;
Till St. Bride's bells loudly pealing,
Drowned with brazen clang the strain,
Calling to the common altar
Knightly troop and menial train.
Then Lord Clifford and his soldiers

Passed from out the castle gate,
Stepping lighter than their wont was
Free from steel and armour's weight.
Now a scornful jest they uttered,
Now an angry oath they swore,
At the cloaked and hooded peasants
Crowding to the chapel door.

In the church they met and mingled,
And the anthem rose on high,
While the priests beside the altar,
Clad in copes of crimson dye,
Blessed the boughs that strewed the chancel,
And the garlands, thickly hung,
Sprinkled o'er them holy water,
And the breathing censer swung.
But a warrior's eye is watchful,
Taught by many a desperate chance,
And Lord Clifford, gazing round him,
Met a look that braved his glance.
And he knew the dark-browed peasant
Shrouded in his ample cloak,
Whom he met within the valley,
And to whom in wrath he spoke ;
But the red flush on his forehead,
Fled as swiftly as it came,
When that churl, with arm uplifted,
Shouted forth a dreaded name ;
" Douglas, ho ! a Douglas " loudly
Through the vaulted chapel rang,
And each cloaked and hooded peasant
From his humble posture sprang.
Off the cloaks flew, out the swords flashed,

And instead of anthem tones,
Curses, short and savage, sounded,
Mingled fast with dying groans.
And in place of holy water,
Blood that sprang in crimson showers,
Sprinkled priestly robe and altar,
And the consecrated flowers.
Nought but this Lord Clifford uttered,
"Would I had been wiser then,
When my warning angel brought us
Face to face within the glen.
Strike, dark Douglas, now I know thee !
Let me fall by knightly hand !"
On his helmless head descending
Swiftly fell the flashing brand.
For a short space Douglas lingered
Bending o'er the fallen foe,
For the work of death was ended,
And each English head laid low.
"Better had it pleased me, Clifford,
To have met thee, lance to lance !
But the time allows no scruple,
And despair must grasp at chance.
Onward now with me, my comrades !
And the tale shall long be told,
How the Douglas spoiled the spoiler,
And regained his father's hold."

Savour of the mighty pasty,
Fragrance of the brimming wine,
Floated through the ample chamber,
Where Lord Clifford went to dine.
But the lips that should have tasted

Stiffened on the chapel floor,
And the hands that carved the banquet
Redly reeked with English gore.
“Thanks for this good cheer, Lord Clifford !”
Spoke the Douglas, grim of mood,
“Rarely fare we thus my comrades,
We who dwell in cave and wood.
Fill the wine cup, take your revel,
Many a day of toil and fast
Waits us, ere again we gather
Round so plenteous a repast.
Ere the palsied arm of Scotland
Keep her borders with the sword,
And the halls of Douglas offer
Safety to their rightful Lord.
But though short our hour of triumph
We shall light it with a gleam,
That along the page of story
Like a bloody star shall stream.”
Savage was the din and laughter,
Till the Douglas gave a sign,
Down they dashed the cups and flagons,
And the chamber swam with wine.
From the church they bore the corpses,
Flung them warm and bleeding all,
Mixed with fragments of the banquet,
Scattered thickly through the hall.
Flung above them flag and scutcheon,
Arms and vestments, redly steeped,
Boughs and faggots, quick to kindle,
Over all in haste they heaped.
Fired the pile, and outward rushing,
Saw the curling smoke on high,

Rolling up as from an altar
Blacken all the noonday sky.
Thus the Douglas spoiled the spoiler,
Thus he won his father's hold,
Thus the Douglas fired his Larder
In the stormy days of old.

THE KIRK OF KILLIECHRIST.

"In the early part of the 17th century, a party of Glengarry's men surprised a numerous body of the Mackenzies, while assembled at prayer within the wall of Killiechrist Chapel on a Sunday morning—shut them up within the building, and then set fire to it; whilst the piper of the Macdonalds marched round the church, playing a pibroch, until the shrieks of the miserable victims were hushed in death."—*Gazetteer of Scotland*. The tune, so played, was adopted afterwards as the war march of Glengarry.

THE kirk was filled on Sunday morn,
The kirk of Killiechrist,
When down the glen Glengarry's men
Came swarming through the mist,
And rent the air with joyful yell
To find the foeman snared so well,
And drowned the psalm with savage din,
And mocked the wail that rose within.

With dirk and sword they hacked the boughs,
And heaped the heather round,
They lit the fire, and fanned it higher
With scarf and plaid unbound,
And laughed with hellish glee, to hear
The prisoned wail of woe and fear,

And gashed the writhing hands that tore
At window-chink, and guarded door.

“The piper, ho !” Macdonald cried,
 And forth the piper sprang,
And hitched and hove and strained and strove
 Till drone and chanter sang.
“Now,” said the chief, with wicked glance,
“We’ll give them music to their dance,
And you shall earn a silver crown,
When you have played the dancers down.”

The piper marched around the kirk,
 The kirk of Killiechrist—
High rose in air the smoke and glare,
 The faggots cracked and hissed ;
The fierce flames shot with hungry roar
Through crackling roof and crumbling door,
And licked with red and ravening tongue
The shuddering prey on which they sprung.

But round and round the piper marched
 With puffed and purple face,
And tuned his drones to chiming tones,
 And timed his stately pace.
And now the death-shriek louder wailed,
And now the screaming pipe prevailed,
Now bag-pipe lilt and wild lament
In one infernal chorus blent.

Down sank the roof, and upwards shot
 From out the crumbling crust,
A fiery stream, a bloody steam,
 A whirl of smoke and dust ;

The smouldering rafters piled the floor,
Where shriek and moan were heard no more,
And, rent with many a yawning crack,
The ghastly walls stood bare and black.

The piper marched around the kirk,
The kirk of Killiechrist,
And tuned his drones to louder tones
With many a turn and twist.
And from his pipe a blast he blew
Of yelling triumph wild and new,
The pibroch destined long to fan
The warfire of Glengarry's clan.

MARJORY, COUNTESS OF CARRICK.

The Bruce of the following verses was the father of King Robert, "the Bruce of Bannockburn." The romantic incident which they attempt to describe is related as authentic history by Tytler. The castle, acquired in such a pleasant fashion, was Turnberry, on the coast of Ayrshire.

EARLY through the forest glade
Rode the Lord of Annandale,
While the level sunbeam played
On his plume and polished mail.
Lofty form and lordly eye
Spoke a lineage proud and high,
And his dark cheek betrayed the brand
Of Syria's glowing sun and sand.

Now he made his charger bound
To the touch of spur or rein ;

Now his keen eyes roved around,
Watchful in a strange domain.
Surely there the bugle rang ;
Surely there the roe-deer sprang ;
And there full sure in eager throng
The hounds and hunters swept along.

Was there glamour in the grove ?
Was enchantment in the air ?
Never dream or fancy wove
Aught so sudden, strange, and fair.
Maiden forms of lissome grace
Glowed and panted in the chase ;
And like a flock of doves they wheeled,
While loud their merry laughter pealed,—

Flocking doves that to the light
Shiver many a glancing wing ;
And they gathered round the knight,
Veering in a closer ring.
Loose from many a shapely limb
Floated zone and kirtle slim ;
And tangled tresses, soft and sleek,
Played with the breeze that fanned the cheek.

Forward rode the fairest there,
And she spake with queenly pride—
“ Ho ! Sir Knight, your name declare,
And why in these bounds you ride,
Where, a forest queen, we reign
Girdled with our maiden train,
And doom to dungeon gloom, the eye
Of knight or knave that comes to spy ! ”

Quoth the knight, and doffed his helm—

“ Be you woman, as you seem,
Or the queen of fairy realm,
Or the phantom of a dream,
I shall answer, trusting still
Form so fair ne’er boded ill ;
My name is Bruce, my blood I trace
From sires of Scotland’s royal race.

“ Syria saw me seven long years
Waste my manhood in its bloom,
Warring with King Edward’s spears
For the holy cross and tomb.
Know you pleasant Annandale ?
Lord am I of that wide vale ;
And thither now I urge my steed,
If nought ungracious mar my speed.

“ Riding early through the glade,
From my train I strayed at morn,
And, till some kind fairy aid,
Wander here a knight forlorn.
Never to the foe I knelt,
Never bond or fetter felt ;
To you I yield, and only crave
To know of whom I am the slave.”

In that lady’s eye, the smile
Blended with a softer light,
And she told her name and style—
Marjory, by birth and right,
Countess of all Carrick wide,
And a Royal ward beside ;

“And now forgive,” she said, “my jest,
And grace my halls, a welcome guest.”

“Nay,” said Bruce, in quick alarm,
“Bid me not one hour delay,
Lure me not with elfin charm
From my homeward path to stray.”
For ’twere safer far, he deemed,
Clutching at the fruit that gleamed
All golden in the dragon’s guard,
Than paltering with a royal ward.

On her cheek, the kindling pride
Flushed, and like a shadow passed,
For love’s warmer, wilder tide
Rose within her bosom fast ;
But, although the heart may yield,
Woman’s wit is still a shield—
“And dare you thus our proffer slight :
Ho ! chains for this discourteous knight !”

Round him flocked the winsome train,
Drowned his speech with jest and glee,
Led his charger by the rein
To the Castle by the sea.
Wherefore need the rest be told ?
Ere another moon had rolled,
Blithe bells pealed over tower and tide,
And Marjory was Bruce’s bride.

EDINBURGH, 1650.

THE Provost to the Council spoke—

“ Brave news of Lesley and the war ;
Camped on the hills above Dunbar,
He quells the foe without a stroke ;
The sectaries are in his toils,
And closer still he draws the coils.

‘ There fiercely frets the roundhead chief,
And scans the wave from morn till night ;
But not a vessel heaves in sight
With hope of rescue or relief ;
While famine wastes the soldier’s limbs,
And cools the fervour of his hymns.

“ Aha ! how is their boast rebuked,
Who fall into the snare they laid !
Whose squadrons pranced, whose trumpets brayed
Against our walls, as if they looked
To see them at the blast alone,
Like Jericho’s, in ruin strewn.

“ But we had heard of Drogheda,
That ran with blood, and rang with shrieks,
And know what language Cromwell speaks
To such as dare dispute his law,
What savage steel the godly wear,
What crimson hands they fold in prayer.

“ And courage in our camp was found,
And wisdom in our council hall,

Not shared, it may have been, by all ;
And here the Provost looked around,
With bland eyes beaming self applause,
A moment, ere he broke the pause,

“Then let the ringers ready be
To shake the town with brazen roar,
And cram Mons Meg that she may pour
A salvo o’er the Lothians three ;
For any hour may bring a post
With news of Cromwell’s captured host.”

With that there came a hurried tramp,
That stayed no challenge at the door ;
And, staggering o’er the Council floor,
A soldier from the Scottish camp
Leaned on his sword, and, gasping, sought
For breath to speak the news he brought.

“Speak, man, what news ?” the Provost said,
With stammering tongue and whitening cheek ;
“Here’s wine ; drink deep ; and quickly speak.
Has Cromwell forced the pass, and fled ?
Or is he safe in English keels ?
Is Lesley hard upon his heels ?”

“Look to your gates,” the soldier said ;
“This morning, Cromwell turned at bay,
Broke at a blow our loose array,
And all is lost ; the army fled ;
While Oliver behind them rides
With his avenging Ironsides.”

BARCLAY OF LADYLAND.

"A daring catholic baron, named Barclay of Ladyland, seized and fortified Ailsa, a small island in the shape of a huge rugged rock, off the coast of Ayr, with the design of delivering it to the Spaniards. This desperate enterprise was defeated by Mr. Andrew Knox, minister of Paisley, whose prowess had been shown some five years before this, in seizing George Kerr, with the Spanish blanks. With like success, this devoted member of the kirk, having discovered Barclay's plot, girded on his sword, and taking boat, with a few daring assistants, attacked the traitor on his rock, and reduced him to such extremity, that rather than be taken alive, he rushed into the sea."—TYTLER.

"ERE the true faith unchampioned die,
One Zion shall arise on high,
On Ailsa Craig I'll take my stand,"
Said Barclay, Laird of Ladyland.

"There like a beacon o'er the foam
Shall gleam the sacred lamp of Rome,
A star, unshaken and sublime,
Amid this dark apostate time."

The fisher of the Clyde describes
The rampart on the Craig arise,
And, soaring higher in endless rings,
A thickening cloud of startled wings.

The news has come to Paisley town,
And Andrew Knox has doffed his gown,
And sworn an oath before the Lord,
To take the traitor by the sword.

A swift boat shoots from Carrick's shore,
To Ailsa Craig it rushes o'er,

And Andrew Knox upon the prow
Points upward to the Island brow.

Points with his sword, and grimly cries,
“ See, yonder where Baal’s altars rise !
See, where his prophets stand arrayed,
And shout upon their god for aid ! ”

Upon the rocky strand they leap,
And clamber up the dizzy steep,
And o’er the rampart force their way,
Where Barclay stoutly stands at bay.

“ Now yield thyself,” the preacher cried,
“ Ere with thy blood my sword be dyed,
Thou art alone—lo, look around,
Thy comrades all are slain or bound !

What can avail a vain defence ?
Hop’st thou with wings to flee from hence ?
Hast thou a refuge in the sky,
If further up the Craig thou fly ? ”

But Barclay kept his guard and spoke,—
“ Thou wolf, that wear’st the shepherd’s cloak,
Whose fangs have ravined in the fold
That held the pious flock of old ;

“ For mercy never shall I kneel !
My blood shall never stain thy steel !
Nor shalt thou have the smallest shred
Of Barclay’s frame, alive or dead ! ”

Then, springing higher up the ledge,
He stood upon its outward edge,
Where, rolling from his foot, the stone
Shot downward like a plummet prone.

“ Ha ! wherefore stand ye all aback
Three paces from the prey you track ?
Come, make your spring, here where I stand ! ”
Said Barclay, Laird of Ladyland.

“ You dare not ! go then, and declare
What Barclay for his faith could dare,
Who, living, scorned to be your slave,
And, freely dying, chose his grave ! ”

His lips one moment moved in prayer,
One step he made from rock to air,
And downward in the Clyde beneath,
Sank like a sword within the sheath.

DRIMINNOR.

The incidents which form the subject of the following ballad are related in “ Picken’s Traditionary Stories of Old Families.”

A CURSE is on thy crumbling wall ;
For blacker chance was never known
Than stained with blood thy banquet hall,
Driminnor by the Don !

Long burned a deadly feud betwixt
The Forbes and the Gordon clan,

And oft in angry strife they mixt,
And oft the red blood ran.

How should a Forbes e'er forget
Fierce Adam Gordon, and the hour
When Corgarf Castle he beset,
And burned its stubborn tower?

And heard, unmoved, its lady shriek,
Her children weeping at her knee—
"Oh! for ae blast to blaw the reek,
My sweet young babe, frae thee!"

But wisdom found a voice at length,
And "Let us meet," the chiefs agreed,
"To staunch the wounds that drain our strength
And daily burn and bleed.

"Let each bring twenty of his clan,
And meet we at Driminnor both,
To pledge to peace a flowing can,
And seal it with an oath."

The hour was come, the guests were met,
In garb of peace they came arrayed,—
Each Forbes, by a Gordon set,
His friendly trust displayed.

And joy swelled like a tide full-flood,
And hands were clasped, and healths went round,
The hate that ne'er was quenched in blood,
In wine was quickly drowned.

Well pleased, the chieftains stood apart,
And watched the mirth with smiling brow,
Said Gordon, "Never did my heart
So blithely beat as now."

"But what if we had failed to smoothe
Our strife, and kindled fiercer scorn?"
Said Forbes, "You shall hear the truth,
Since peace is firmly sworn.

"Sad work and bloody would have been,
Each Gordon on the floor had gasped—
Nay, start not! you yourself have seen
Our hands in friendship clasped.

"Each of my clansmen in his vest,
Beneath the tartan hides his blade,
Ready to pierce his neighbour's breast,
If but *this* sign I made."

And his unconscious hand he drew
Down o'er his long beard, silver-hoar;
Ah, dire mischance! his clansmen knew
The sign, and nothing more.

Out flashed a score of daggers bright,
Flashed sudden as the lightning's dart,
And fell as swiftly, sheathed outright,
In every Gordon's heart.

Like men, half waking, half asleep,
The chieftains stood in dumb surprise—
Gazed round the hall, then straight and deep
Into each other's eyes.

Said Forbes grimly then, "I take
No guilt for this unhappy hour ;
But let this blood the ashes slake
Of Corgarf's blazing tower."

ANDREW BARTON'S WHISTLE.

The naval action which the following verses describe was one of the incidents which fanned the flame of hostility between Henry VIII. and James IV., and occasioned in the following year, 1513, the disastrous battle of Flodden.

KING HENRY, frowning, met his peers,
And spake in fashion short—
"What news are these that grate our ears
From every English port ?
Our galleons sunk, our seamen slain,
By Scottish rovers of the main !

"Where's the Great Harry, which our sire
In pride of heart did launch ?
Or have I not for love or hire,
One captain, stout and staunch,
To chase these sea-kites to their nest,
That dare to hawk at England's crest ?"

Out spake Earl Surrey, bold and bluff—
"By Heaven, this shall not be,
While I have English ground enough
To fit a ship for sea,
Or sons, who boast the Howard blood,
To hoist a flag upon the flood."

Northward from Dover, with the breeze,
The good ship *Lion* sped ;
Long shall the plundered Portuguese
Recount her cruise with dread,
And rue the wild cheer of her crew
When Andrew Barton's whistle blew.

And blithely now to sail and shroud
The hardy seaman sprang ;
For light was he of heart, and loud
His rough sea-ditty rang ;
And, with the gale, his hopes flew north
To the broad haven of the Forth.

But Barton's keen eyes, roving wide,
Grew fixed in eager gaze ;
He called a gunner to his side,
And pointed through the haze—
“ Mark yon two ships in trim of war,
Sea-dogs of English breed they are !

“ Full sail they come, and all at once
Their snarling muzzles show ;
Up with the helm ; stand to your guns ;
Be ready for the foe ;
And let them bark ; the *Lion's* roar
Shall scare them, as it scared before.”

And swift and straight, as eagles swoop,
Came England's towering sail ;
St. George's banner o'er each poop
Swung broadly to the gale ;
And Howard's *Lion* shook on high
A mane of gold against the sky.

Hoarse challenge soon the trumpet gave—

“Down with your flag and yield ;
No more must Scotland's banner wave
A saucy pirate's shield !”

But Barton turned him to his crew,
And loudly on his whistle blew.

“Hark ye, my men ; ye know me well,
And know this whistle's sound,
Which never yet the loudest yell
Of storm or battle drowned !
While I have breath to blow a note,
That flag on high shall proudly float.

“And while my whistle rings around,
Fight on in stubborn fray ;
And, if my whistle cease to sound,
Avenge me if you may ;
For, with the latest sound it sent,
Be sure that Barton's spirit went.”

With that, his volley crashing flew
Against the English oak ;
And, like its echo, quick and true
Lord Howard's thunder broke ;
But, in the roaring battle, still
The whistle sounded loud and shrill.

Nor e'er, although outnumbered far,
The Scottish crew did quail ;
Though thundering down came sail and spar,
Rent by the iron hail.
The decks ran blood, the splinters flew ;
But still the whistle loudly blew.

Till suddenly, as when a light
Is quenched in utter gloom,
The piercing pipe, that ruled the fight
Above the cannon's boom,
Was mute ; and, like a frost of fear,
Its silence fell on heart and ear.

Down dropped the arm that rose to strike,
As smitten by a spell ;
Down dropped the arquebuse and pike,
The flaming linstock fell.
Who recked now how the battle went,
Since Andrew Barton's breath was spent ?

Who recked although the English foe
Fast o'er the bulwarks poured ;
Though sank St. Andrew's banner low,
And Howard's Lion soared ?
While Andrew Barton lay in death,
No more to give his whistle breath.

LADY MAY.

Oh ! will ye hear of Lady May,
The Earl's one daughter dear ?
Oh ! will ye hear of Lady May
The fairest far or near ?

"Now hear me, May," the old Earl said,
"I have no child but thee,
And I would see, before I die,
A grandson on my knee."

“And if thou wed Sir Ralph,” he said,
“My blessing shall be thine ;
But if thou wed Sir Guy, beware
The curse of Heaven and mine !”

Said May within her heart, “Sir Ralph
My lord should never be,
If but one man on earth were left,
And that one man were he.

Sir Guy is but a landless squire,
Sir Ralph has acres wide,
But if Sir Guy a beggar were,
I'd be that beggar's bride.”

Sir Ralph has met the Lady May
Within the lonesome dell ;
None saw, when she fled forth alone,
None knew, what there befell.

But underneath the alder tree
In the pool, so still and dark,
With a silver bodkin in his breast,
Sir Ralph lies stiff and stark.

The Lady May has hied her home
And called her little page,
“Now speed thee forth, my trusty lad,
As a bird flees from the cage !”

She filled his hand with yellow gold,
She filled his ears with praise,
“Now bear this letter to Sir Guy
By sure and secret ways.”

And she has gathered brooch and clasp,
And gold and jewels fine,
And she has ridden forth alone,
When the moon began to shine.

“ Oh welcome, welcome ! ” said Sir Guy,
“ Whatever may betide,
Or rich or poor, or blest or banned,
I take thee for my bride !

“ Oh welcome, welcome ! ” said Sir Guy,
“ But we must haste from here,
For when we’re missed in yonder tower,
They’ll chase us like the deer.”

“ Let chase who will,” said May, “ I ride
My father’s fleetest steed ; ”
“ Then on, with lighter heart ! ” said he,
“ For mine will match its speed.”

Then, through the mirk, mirk wood they sped
With clattering rein and hoof,
The red moon reeled, the white stars flew
Through gaps of blue aloof.

And wild things woke at their hoof-stroke,
From nightly roost and lair,
And fled through fern and grass, or flapped
With flurried wing the air.

“ I fear, I fear,” said Lady May,
“ That fast behind they ride—
Oh hark ! what hurrying hoofs behind
Come on with thundering stride ! ”

"No sound I hear but the night wind drear,
But keep with me the pace,
And come no worse than mortal man,
We two will win the race."

On, on they flew, while mirker grew
The fir-black forest roof,
The night wind moaned, the rotten twig
Flew crackling from the hoof.

"Oh were we out of this mirk wood,
And o'er the moor!" she cried,
"For as I'm woman born, I think
There's one rides at our side."

"Cheer up, cheer up, thou'lt laugh away
Such fears and fancies soon,
For yonder lies the wide, wide moor,
All shimmering to the moon!"

They've left behind the mirk, mirk wood,
And o'er the moor they flee,
"Look round, look round, Sir Guy," she said,
"And say, what dost thou see?"

"I see the mist come creeping grey
Beneath the ghastly moon,
I see thy sweet face by my side,
But pale as in a swoon."

Well might the lady's face be pale,
For she knew, that at her side
Though never she dared to lift her eyes,
The dead rode stride for stride.

"Oh is thy tower yet far, Sir Guy?
Fain would I rest," said she:
A low voice laughed—but not Sir Guy's,
"Thou'lt rest to-night with me."

Out spake Sir Guy, "I fear, I fear
That we have ridden astray,
For I see no mark on the wide, wide moor,
Where the mist comes creeping grey."

The mist came creeping, cold and grey,
And hid both star and moon,
"I'm weary, weary," said Lady May,
"And sick as in a swoon."

"Draw bridle, draw bridle, Sir Guy," she said,
"Through the mist I may not see,
And I fear to lose thee in the mirk,
So reach thy hand to me!"

She took the hand that was held to her
With a sore cry and a start,
"Oh! this hand is cold as the crystal ice,
And it freezes to my heart."

"Oh! well may it be cold, false May,
And freeze thy very vein,
For a night and a day, in the lonesome glen,
In the dark pool it has lain!"

Oh! sore, sore shrieked the Lady May,
But the cold hand kept its grasp,
And round her form a ghostly arm
Twined like an iron clasp.

When birds were singing in the dawn,
And dew were on the spray,
In the lonesome pool, deep, dark, and cool,
Next morn two corpses lay.

QUEEN MARY, AFTER LANGSIDE.

OH roll and rave, thou Solway wave !
On rock and haven rave and roar !
Roll wild and wide, a pathless tide,
While Mary pauses by thy shore !
Though loud behind be scorn and wrath,
Yet roll thy waves, to bar her path !

The startled light yet haunts her eyes,
The battle shout yet thrills her ear,
Her locks are loose, her lovely face
Is wet with sorrow, wan with fear ;
She stands, distracted and discrowned,
And homeless upon Scottish ground.

“ Oh stay, my lady liege and loved ! ”
Lord Herries kneels and sues with tears,
“ Trust not the Tudor’s jealous hate,
Trust not a rival’s burning fears !
Far better Lindsay’s ruffian grasp
Than crafty Burleigh’s dungeon clasp.

Or if thou wilt no more endure
This land of blood, and crown of fire,
We’ll bear thee back to sunny France,
The home of loyal lance and lyre,

Where thou, through many a happy hour
Wast peerless in thy beauty's flower."

In vain—in vain—so sore beset,
So rash in hope, so blind in trust,
She bids them hoist the sail, and shakes
From off her feet the Scottish dust,
And turns, where Cumbria's mountains rise,
The trouble of her wild blue eyes.

Oh for one warning whisper then !
One rending flash to cleave the gloom
That veiled the weary years of pain,
The prison blight, the felon doom,
The faded face, the tresses gray,
The fatal block of Fotheringay !

THE GIPSY'S PROPHECY.

THE gipsy scanned the infant face
That in the cradle smiled,
And long she muttered, long she gazed,
Ere from the calm blue eyes she raised
Her own, so grey and wild.

With eager ear, the mother bent
To hear the mystic lore,
"Now cross my palm with silver fine"
The gipsy said—"for news like mine
Is worth your richest store !"

On the unwritten page of time
I read with charmed glance,

I read his fortune, strange and high—
To wear the kingly robe, and die
Upon the throne of France.

How leapt that mother's heart with pride
Beneath her peasant gown !
And ever nursing dreams of joy,
Upon the young brow of her boy
She saw the golden crown.

O'er France a day of terror dawned
When vengeance, thirsting long,
Her bloody feast in Paris held,
And, drunk with slaughter, danced and yelled,
And screamed her maniac song.

Around Versailles in furious swarm
The rabble surged and rolled,
Burst through the vainly-guarded gate,
And splashed with blood the halls of state,
And tissues, rich with gold.

Among the fiercest and the first,
A youth was seen that day,
Who fought, begrimed with blood and dust,
Till, writhing with a bayonet thrust,
Upon the floor he lay.

Within the presence hall he fell,
The royal throne was nigh,
And on that couch his comrades grim,
Stirred by a strange and savage whim,
Laid him to bleed and die.

They wrapped him in a silken shroud
Torn from the curtained wall,
And the red blood ran like a stream,
And dimmed the silver lilies' gleam
Upon his purple pall.

There on the throne of France he died
Amid the tumult roar ;
But one there was who tore her hair,
And wailed her hopes in wild despair,
And curst the gipsy's lore.

MARGARET DRUMMOND.

"James IV. selected as his mistress Lady Margaret Drummond, the daughter of a noble house. . . . His coffers were exhausted to keep up her splendid establishment. . . . When residing at Drummond Castle, Lady Margaret, along with her sisters, Euphemia and Sybella, were suddenly seized with an illness, which attacked them immediately after a repast, and soon after died in great torture, their last struggles exhibiting the symptoms of poison. The bodies of the fair sufferers were instantly carried to Dunblane, and there buried with precipitancy, which increased the suspicion."—
TYTLER.

Woe is me for Margaret Drummond,
And her sisters twain ;
Done to death in Drummond Castle ;
Buried in Dunblane !

Fair were they in life's young blossom,
First in hall and bower ;
Cursed be the cruel hand
That crushed them in their flower !

And woe is me for Margaret,
The fairest of the three !
The king had seen her winsome face,
And dear to him was she.

He decked her fair with pearl and gold,
And dreamed of her alone ;
Nor cared though grey heads gravely shook,
And murmured round the throne.

“ My faith I owe to heaven,” he said,
“ My sceptre to my son,
My sword to Scotland, but my love—
My love I owe to none.

“ And wherefore should a king fare worse,
Than any clown,” he said,
“ Who chooses her whom he will love,
And loves whom he will wed ?

“ What tell they me of Margaret,
King Henry’s daughter dear ?
The world has but one Margaret
Of whom I care to hear.”

But still the grey heads gravely shook,
And some in anger swore
That Margaret and her sisters twain
Should vex the State no more.

They gave them poison in their drink
That burned to heart and brain ;
They bore them dead from Drummond Castle
Quickly to Dunblane.

They laid them in a hasty grave
Without or book or bell,
Lest the king should madden o'er her
Whom he loved so well.

THE JEST OF EARL DOUGLAS.

THRIVE CASTLE stands in Galloway,
And there Earl Douglas dined one day,
When loud the warder's summons rang,
And from the board he sprang.

"A horseman! to the gates he rides,
And fiercely spurs his courser's sides,
And now he checks his headlong speed,
And now he reins his steed."

Earl Douglas from his tower looked down,
And darkly flushed his hasty frown,—
"What! will they brave me in my hold?
St. Bride! but this is bold!

"And thinks Sir Patrick Gray to cheat
My vengeance with a parchment sheet,
And thinks King James to curb my will
With flourish of a quill.

"Off with Maclellan's head! I'll play
A game with you, Sir Patrick Gray,
And with a memorable jest
Shall answer your behest.

“Off with Maclellan’s head, I say !
There in the court below, away !
Leave where it falls the corpse,—and now,
Smooth speech and courteous brow.”

Sir Patrick stept into the hall,
“My Lord,” he said, “you hold in thrall”—
But Douglas waved a courteous hand,
And spoke with accent bland.

“Sir Patrick, trust the wholesome rule ;
Between the fasting and the full,
Ill speeds the talk. Let business wait ;
First, dinner—then, debate.

Sir Patrick with a sullen grace
Beside the Douglas took his place,
On whose dark brow, an evil smile
Was hovering all the while.

Short was the talk—the banquet short,—
When Douglas spake,—“What news from court ?
And what commands are those you bring
From our good lord the king ?”

“The king, my lord, has heard with grief
That here you keep, caged like a thief
A gentleman of good degree,
A friend, most dear to me.

“He holds you true and loyal still,
And in this scroll declares his will,
That you your captive set at large,
And yield him to my charge.”

“Right gladly I the king obey,”
Earl Douglas said, and led the way ;
But when into the court they passed,
Sir Patrick stood aghast.

“Sir Knight, your sister’s son lies here,
Though shorter by the head, I fear ;
But take him as you find him, free
Of cost or ransom fee !”

Never a word Sir Patrick said,
But bent an instant o’er the dead,
Then sought the gateway, found his steed,
And mounted in hot speed.

Then high his clenched hand he raised,
And forth his stifled fury blazed ;
“Oh villain Earl ! but you shall pay
For this another day.”

For life—for life, away he dashed,
While angry spears behind him flashed ;
For when did e’er a Douglas brook
Insulting word or look ?

Nor flagged the fierce pursuit, until
Dunedin’s crag and lion hill
A refuge to the knight arose,
A menace to his foes.

But well Sir Patrick paid his debt
When that proud earl again he met,
When Stirling’s halls with blood were stained,
And royal faith profaned.

THE DREAM OF CARDINAL BEATON.

THE Cardinal sprang from his couch as one in mortal
fear,
And the voice, that shook his soul in sleep, still sounded
on his ear ;
For a dream of dread remembrance came before the
break of morn,
And Wishart from the scaffold spoke in triumph and
in scorn.
“ Ha ! sitst thou on thy towers, begirt with cannon
and with sword,
Proud priest, to watch the torment of the servant of
the Lord !
Thou, who hast shamed thy mitre, wallowing in unholy
joys,
And raged against the truth of God, with ruthless
hand and voice !
I tell thee, for no throne on earth would I this day
resign
The scaffold and the stake, whose ashes soon shall mix
with mine.
From yon heavens that open o’er me, angel hands are
reaching down,
They beckon me, they offer me the martyr’s glorious
crown ;
And when flesh and fibre crumble in the faggots scorch-
ing blaze,
My spirit at the throne of God shall sound the harp
of praise.
But thou ! Heaven’s dawning light divides the dark
of time, and shows

Thy splendour like a falling star shoot swiftly to its
close.

Oh hark ! and if not wholly lost, oh heed the warning
given !

Ere thrice the moon shall roll her full round wheel
through yonder heaven,

There, where thou sitst, thou shalt be seen, a vision to
appal

The burghers of St. Andrews gathered round thy castle
wall."

The Cardinal sprang from his couch in horror and
dismay,

But not to laugh away his fears and bless the light of
day,

For loud upon his waking ears a dreadful summons
came,

Fierce hands beat at his chamber door, stern voices
called his name.

"Open quickly," shouted Lesley, "or we force a way
with fire !"

And his sword hilt struck the panelled oak in hot
impatient ire.

Vain, vain to plead or parley, vain to sue for mercy
then ;

The wolf as well might cringe and whine when hunters
storm his den.

With faltering hand he drew the bolt, sank silent in
his chair,

And gazed upon his murderers with fixed and stony
stare.

Sharp steel glanced thickly round him, reddening from
the frequent stroke,

But calmer Melville thrust the blades aside, and gravely spoke—

“Not as mine own avenger, not with malice of a foe,
I lift this sword against thy heart to deal the mortal
blow ;

But hither, chosen and charged, we come, Heaven’s
instruments of wrath,

Whose hand through all thy barrier walls has showed
and shaped a path.

Remember martyred Wishart ! for his blood cries from
the stake,

And the judgment falls upon thee, which with dying
lips he spake.”

That morn St. Andrews’ bells were wildly rung with
warning call,

And the startled burghers gathered underneath the
castle wall.

High above stood Norman Lesley, and he pointed with
his sword

To the corpse of the Lord Cardinal, all hacked and
hewed and gored !

“Fools,” he cried, “what seek ye here ? ye shout upon
your god in vain—

Look upon him where he lies, and get you to your
homes again !”



THE DEATH OF ALEXANDER III.

EARL PATRICK feasted at Dunbar with many a lordly
guest,
And when the stream of grave debate flashed into mirth
and jest,
The Earl, grown merry with his wine, began to flout
and jeer
True Thomas, lord of Ercildoun, the rhymer and the
seer.
“How now! Sir Bard and Oracle, whose riddles and
whose rhymes
Through all the country jingle like a Merry-Andrew’s
chimes,
To make the people gape and stare and rack their silly
brains,
Like dogs that mumble bones, and get no mouthful
for their pains.
What news of late from fairy land? what secrets in
thine ears
Of far events, whose footfall rustles through a thousand
years?
A cheap and easy art is thine where none may pierce
the dark
Of centuries afar, to know if thou hast hit the mark,
Or fix to honest date and deed the dark and slippery
phrase,
Which thou, or any one who will may twist a hundred
ways.
But tell us of to-morrow something hid from mortal
men,

That all may see and all may hear, and we will trust
you then."

The Rhymer bent upon the Earl his grave and gentle
eyes,

As a staghound on the barking cur he stoops not to
chastise :

"To-morrow ! be it as thou wilt, to-morrow then, and
soon,

Ere the shadow of the dial shall have crossed the hour
of noon,

A storm-blast, such as never rushed from out the
heavens before,

Shall burst in thunder gloom, and shake the land from
shore to shore,

And proud Dunedin's high-built towers shall tremble
on their rock,

And the isles, that lie in mist and foam, shall shudder
to the shock,

From town and tower lament shall rise, and men in
mart and street,

Smit pale with sudden fear, shall cease to chaffer and
to cheat,

And the echoes of that blast shall roll in far resounding
tones,

Through all the coming ages, shaping kingdoms, shak-
ing thrones.

And here, Sir Earl, until that hour will I abide your
guest,

And here, Sir Earl, shall thine own lips my truth and
skill attest."

Next morn the sun in splendour rose, and climbed the
skies of June,

And the lords and ladies watched the shadow creeping
near to noon.

They looked upon the gleaming sea—no ripple on its
breast,

They looked upon the summer sky—no cloud from east
to west,

They looked up to the castle flag—about the staff it
clung,

They looked up to the branching elm—no tiny leaflet
swung.

They looked upon the Rhymer's face, and wondered to
behold

That still he wore the lofty brow, the look serenely bold.

The Earl bent o'er the dial stone, and watched the
silent track

Of shadow, ever creeping, ever lessening, sharp and
black.

"It touches—no—not yet—not yet, a moment's grace,"
he cried.

Hark ! the thunder of fleet hoofs, the crash of gates
in haste flung wide !

A haggard horseman in their midst leaps with a face
of fright :

"At Kinghorn by the sea, the king lies dead since
yesternight !

In darkness spurring near the cliff, from brink to base
he rolled,

And woe is me ! I saw his face this morning, dark and
cold."

Earl Patrick heard, and smote his brow, and cried in
anguish sore,

"Accursed be that night of blight and blackness ever-
more !

Dead in his prime—King Alexander—dead, the good
and true,
To whom, more than a thousand oaths, our love was
fealty due.
Dead, childless, and but one frail blossom of the royal
blood
Far in the gales of Norway, sickening like a blighted
bud !
Dead, and every dark ambition clutching fiercely at
the crown,
As the vultures fight and jostle, on the carcase swoop-
ing down !
Sir Rhymer, take thy triumph, craft or chance has
served thee well !
I mock thy art no longer, be it won from heaven or
hell ;
But, would to God thy fateful lips as surely could
foreshow
A dawn of comfort breaking on the darkness of our
woe ! ”

PRESTONPANS, 1745.

By Arthur's Seat we lay,
And we marched at break of day,
Not in soldierly parade, not arrayed by trump and
drum,
Scythe-blade and broad claymore
Were the weapons that we bore,
And the music of our march, it was the mountain
pipe's wild hum.

Forward three abreast we strode,
And our prince beside us rode,
The white cockade upon his brow, the tartan on his
breast ;

Oh then, each kindling eye
Flashed with purpose stern and high,
And the hilt of dirk and claymore with a fiercer gripe
we prest !

It was at the noon of day
When we climbed to Birsley brae,
And we looked across the broad blue firth, right onward
to the north ;

But one look to home we sent,
Then our gaze we sternly bent
On the squadrons of the Saxon, camped between us
and the Forth.

Did our hearts one moment quail,
As their shout came from the vale,
And the bright steel bristled thickly o'er the red ranks
of the foe ?

Did not every bosom flush
For one fiery downward rush,
As the eagle from Schiehallion swoops upon the plain
below ?

But the miry moss between
Fenced the foeman with its screen,
And the mist of evening, from the sea came rolling
white and cold ;

On the stubble chill and dank
In rude repose we sank,

And our dreams, like battle-marches, through our
slumbering fancy rolled.

But long ere morning broke,
At a whisper we awoke,
And plunged into the mist beneath, with swift and
stealthy pace ;
By one narrow winding pass
We threaded the morass,
And formed upon the plain unseen, right in the foe-
man's face.

In silence man by man,
Every chief arrayed his clan :
Two slender lines we were, that held our gallant prince
between ;
Right noble was his port,
“ Follow me—*gres ort, gres ort !* ” *
He cried, and on we hurried through the morning's
misty screen.

Up rose the curtain grey,
Rolled from the kindling day,
And we saw the bayonets glittering in many a deadly
row !
One moment then in prayer,
Our brows to heaven were bare,
And, stooping like the wind-swept pine, we burst upon
the foe.

One hasty volley poured—
One sweep of scythe and sword—

* Make haste, make haste.

Do we dream? is this the struggle, that we nerved our
hearts to dare?

Are they fled without a blow?

Are they melted like the snow?

An army trained to battle, marshalled forth in line and
square.

Not all,—amid the tide

Of panic, wild and wide,

Firm as a rock, against the shock, one old grey front
abode;

Thine, Gardiner, brave and good,

Were those white hairs blood-imbrued,

Thine the heart of honour, loyal to thy King and to thy
God!

Proudly in the morning light

Gleamed our standard's red and white,

That like a meteor marshalled us from Moidart's lonely
shore;

Ah! where were then the seers,

Whom our Highland faith reveres,

That they saw not red Culloden, and that standard
steeped in gore?



THE CAPTIVE COVENANTER.

By her ingle, sad and lone,
Sat the Covenanter's dame,
And she heard the children's voice
Making loud and merry noise,
As they shouted at their game;
And her heart rushed to the mountain with a pang of
love and dread,
Where their father in the heather laid his weary
hunted head.

Hark ! the trooper's heavy tramp,
Hoof and bridle ringing near !
Up she leaps with joyful start,
And the cry comes from her heart,
" Thank God, he is not here !
They may break and burn, and spare not, they may
torture every limb,
They shall wring no secret from us, they shall harm no
hair of him ! "

From saddle leapt the troop,
And they hunted low and high,
Rummaged bed and barn and store,
And stabbed through roof and floor,
Where a lurking Whig might lie,
While the children, from their gambols scared, clung to
their mother's gown,
And stared upon the fierce dragoons, blaspheming up
and down.

“Enough,” the captain cried,
As to horse again he sprung,
“We have missed our wary game,
But stay—bring forth the dame,
All the household, old and young ;
Set them here before our silent, sullen captive of the
hill !
And the truth from their unwitting lips may leap
against the will.

Right in front the captive stood,
With stubborn downcast eyes ;
Well they knew him—him, their own,
But not a glance or tone
Told the anguish of surprise,
And the brave wife grappled with her grief, ere from
her lips it broke,
And drew her children close, and hid their faces in her
cloak.

“Lift the bonnet from his brow !
Know you now the prisoner here ?
Speak, stubborn jade, whose tongue
Loud enough in clamour rung
When we broke your household gear !
In the king’s name speak, I charge you, lest your lives
the forfeit pay !”
But not more mute and resolute the mountains stood
than they.

Perplexed and mute he stood,
Then a smile lit up his eye !
Ere the mother guessed his thought,

From her side a child he caught,
And swung it, light and high ;
From the bearded face and waving plume the boy
shrank back dismayed,
And called his father's name aloud, and stretched his
arms for aid.

Down he placed the weeping child,
And a great, glad oath he swore,
“ From the babe's and suckling's lips
How the truth untainted slips !
Gospel writ could prove no more.
It is he—the rankest Whig, that hides in Galloway to-
day ;
Up with him to the saddle there, sound bugles, and
away ! ”

SIR ERIC.

SIR ERIC lay deep in the foeman's keep,
And “ I would to Heaven,” said he,
“ That my keel had sunk to the red sea ware,
That hour when I flew like a bird to the snare
O'er the waves of the Norland Sea ! ”

And sharp grew the dart of the pang at his heart,
As he heard how the wind blew free—
“ Oh ! never again shall my dragons gleam,
And my raven flag on the breezes stream
O'er the waves of the Norland Sea ! ”

“ Fool ! to be wiled by a woman’s guile,
To be soft to a woman’s plea ;
Oh ! she was deadly as she was fair,
Like the Mermaid that combs her golden hair
On the waves of the Norland Sea !

“ Taught by the ire of her merciless sire
She has woven this snare for me—
Who trusts in a woman, were safer to dream,
As he floats on the Maelstrom’s whirling stream
On the waves of the Norland Sea.”

But his wrath was stilled, and his heart was thrilled,
When the door swung wide and free,
And the maid of the isle stole in through the gloom,
Like a sunbeam that strikes to the vault of a tomb,
By the waves of the Norland Sea.

“ My father has sworn to slay thee at morn,
And falsely has dealt with me,
But I come to free thee from death and thrall,
And on me let the shaft of his fury fall
By the waves of the Norland Sea.”

They stood on the strand, by the boat ready-manned,
“ Now farewell for ever,” said she,
“ Not so,” laughed Sir Eric, “ I go not alone ;
If the wolf slip the snare, the lure is his own,
By the waves of the Norland Sea.”

Strong was his arm and light was her form,
Nor loth in his clasp was she ;
And far on the breezes joyous breath
They fled from the towers of thrall and death,
O’er the waves of the Norland Sea.

THE MARSHAL AND THE MILLER.

IN his chamber sat the chief,
When the glorious day was ended,
And another bloody leaf
With his many laurels blended ;
Round him all his staff were met
Bright with star and epaulette.

One he beckoned to his side,
“ Take with you a troop, and follow
Where the stream will be your guide,
To the mill within the hollow.
Seize the miller, bring him here,
Put him not to harm or fear.”

Then the troopers spurred away,
Brought the miller as they found him,
On his brows the hoar dust lay,
And a cloud was floating round him ;
But he stood, a stalwart wight,
Calm, undaunted, and upright.

Quoth the chief, with brow severe,
“ As a spy our scouts regard you ;
But your story I will hear,
Lest a rash doom I award you ;
But beware, lest one false word
’Twist around your neck a cord !

“ And, that nothing be untold,
Say what family you number,

Child and parent, young and old,
Who beneath your roof-tree slumber."
Quoth the miller, "Sir, they lie,
Who have dared to call me spy.

"Never yet to friend or foe
Have I needed to dissemble,
Little has my life to show,
Nought for which to blush or tremble.
I was born beside the mill,
Where I live and labour still.

"To the grave last year I bore
Both my father and my mother ;
Sisters living I have four,
And somewhere a scape-grace brother ;
And, with wife and child to keep,
Never must the mill-wheel sleep."

Softly then the Marshal spake,
"Know you aught of that lost brother?"—
"Well, he was a hair-brained rake,
Always in some scrape or other.
Twenty summers now have sped,
Since from home and friends he fled.

"Nothing base befell—no more
Than hot-blooded youth's mischances,
And we mourned his absence sore,
Spite of all his freaks and fancies.
Long we sought him—found no trace,
Now I scarce would know his face."

“ You speak truly ”—said the chief,
“ Your lost brother stands before you,
Nay, refuse me not belief,
For the mother dear that bore you,
You, in peasant raiment drest,
Clasped me also to her breast !

“ Think not that I fear your scoff,
Ye, who thus have heard my story !
Know me prouder far thereof
Than all other claims to glory,
Prouder thus to have compelled
That which fate at first withheld.

“ But my brother, haste you back
To your simple tasks and treasures !
Fate has in a calmer track
Fixed your proper toils and pleasures,
Sweeter sleep your couch shall yield
Than the trumpet-startled field.

“ Yet, if e'er beneath your roof
Blighting storms of fortune bluster,
Put our kinship to the proof,
Seek me, where my banners muster ;
Fear not from my love to sue !
Have I feared to blush for you ? ”



THE RIDE WITH THE RING.

“How I rode with the ring?” said the grey-bearded
Earl,
As he stroked on the young brow the bright golden
curl,
“A hundred times, child, have you heard it before,
But sit by my side, while I tell you once more.”

At Sheen by the Thames Queen Elizabeth lay,
With the pall on her soul, ere it covered her clay;
And she locked her mute lips on her proud breaking
heart,
For in death, as in empire, her soul stood apart.

And the one word on all English lips was—the Queen,
And reeking posts rode between London and Sheen,
And a keen ear at Holyrood listened elate
For the fast-coming foot of a loftier fate.

I was a young gallant then, lithe as a hound,
Would vault to the back of my steed at a bound,
And to ride, run, or wrestle, was all my delight,
Let fortunes and crowns rise or fall as they might.

My sister at court, she was wiser than I,
And worshipped the sun, ere it rose in the sky,
And she showed me a feat to make all England ring,
A ride swift and straight to the heart of a king.

And I plighted my promise then, early or late,
With my steed ready-saddled her summons to wait;
It came at the close of a sullen March day,
And to Sheen on the instant I galloped away.

But when in a glimpse of the cloud-chequered night
I saw its dark turrets, I checked my swift flight,
And stealthily to the death-chamber drew nigh,
Unseen and unchallenged by warder or spy.

There beneath the lit lattice I waited alone,
Like the Knight of a monument silent in stone ;
For my steed, strangely hushed, checked his mettle-
 some hoof
At a touch of the hand or a whispered reproof.

And I watched the dim shadows flit over the pane,
Till my senses reeled dizzily racked with the strain,
While deeper around grew the shadowing gloom,
As the night laboured on with its burden of doom.

At midnight the great bell of Windsor had tolled,
And three hours thereafter had heavily rolled,
When something, I knew not what, roused every nerve,
And I felt my steed under me startle and swerve.

And the great oaks groaned heavily, swept by a gale,
That crashed through the forest and died in a wail,
And that very moment, as upward I gazed,
The casement above me was silently raised.

And the hand of my sister reached downward, and
 slipped
Into mine the queen's ring, from the dead finger
 stripped ;
Nothing more—not a word—ere the casement-sash
 sank,
My steed sprang away with the spur in his flank.

It was morning of Thursday, but long ere the light,
We distanced the death-bell that followed our flight,
And forty good miles lay behind ere the day
Showed a feather of gold in the glimmering grey.

Then the pulses of labour awoke all around,
And the ploughman, hard by in the new-furrowed
ground,
To the head of his startled team hastily sprang,
As their quivering ears caught the hurrying clang.

And now I drew rein at the rude way-side inns,
When mine host brought a draught from his musty
old bins ;
Now scattered the market, that rallied to stare
While the steam of my steed's panting flanks rose in air.

And swiftly behind me ran turrets and spires,
As onward I flew through the broad English shires,
Through the mesh-work of waters right on to the north,
From the Thames to the Tweed, from the Tweed to
the Forth.

And twice o'er my head rolled the black wave of night,
And twice from the sea rose the sun on my right,
And the sunset's red gates closed behind the third day,
When Arthur's seat loomed through the thickening grey.

But the lights were all out, and the king was abed,
When Holyrood echoed my horse's quick tread ;
But I thundered a summons that made its halls ring,
For my news was safe warrant to startle a king.

And I strode to his chamber, all dabbled with mire,
Where he shivered and stared in disordered attire,
And as England's first liege I saluted my king,
And gave from my bosom Elizabeth's ring.

And the king—well, he swore a great oath of surprise,
And stammered, still rubbing his dim sleepy eyes—
“Rest her saul, is she gane? and she named me her
 heir?
But we'll sleep owre the news, and the morn we'll hear
 mair.”



SIR COLIN OF KILCHURN.

The following ballad is the versified form of a legend connected with the Castle of Kilchurn, the ruins of which are situated at the east end of Loch Awe. The Sir Colin Campbell who figures in it was the ancestor of the Breadalbane family. The castle was built in the year 1440, by himself, or, according to other statements, by his lady, while he was absent on a crusade. For metrical purposes, the name, MacCorquadale, of the disappointed aspirant to the lady's hand, has been altered.

SIR COLIN of Kilchurn abode
Among the shrines of Rome,
Until a little whispered word
Within his veins like venom stirred,
And swiftly drove him home.

“My eyes shall see the truth,” he said,
“As if a stranger saw,”
He doffed his garb of high degree,
At Rome a gallant lord was he,
A beggar by Loch Awe.

- “ O beggar man, so bent and brown ! ”
 Out spoke the Highland crone,
“ Now wherefore come ye here so late ?
 And wherefore pass the castle gate
 To seek my shieling lone ? ”
- “ The castle windows blazed with light,
 The halls were loud with din ;
It might be woe, it might be mirth,
It might be death, it might be birth,
 I feared to enter in.”—
- “ Then rest you here, and share with me
 My humble Highland cheer—
A stranger you, but like a song
Of early years, forgotten long,
 Your voice comes o'er my ear.”
- She spread the board with cup and crust,
 And made the hearth-fire blaze,
She prest him to the simple fare,
And hovered round with restless care
 And wistful wondering gaze.
- Till like the swooping hawk, that long
 With searching eye will soar,
She caught the hand that raised the draught,
And laughed and wept, and wept and laughed,
 And kissed it o'er and o'er.
- “ What scar is this ? what trick is this
 With your old nurse to play,
Who bound the wound when first it bled,
And kissed away the tears you shed
 As on my lap you lay ? ”

“ My boy, whose life was fed from mine !
My chieftain, brave and kind !
The frost of seventy years might weave
Across my eyes a mist of eve,
My heart it could not blind.

“ And O, but ye are come in time
From deadly sin to save !
Your lady long has mourned you dead,
And she to-morrow morn will wed
The Laird of Auchendrave.”

Three strides across the floor he made,
And half his sword he drew,
“ Nay, now,” she said, “ ye are to blame,
From whom no message ever came,
Or tender token true.”

—“ Yea, but I wrote, and vowed my faith,
And ever strove to cheer,
Rich gauds of gold and jewels rare
I sent to make her beauty fair,
And keep my memory dear.”—

“ Then blackly are ye both betrayed—
A year ago,” she cried,
“ A pilgrim from the Paynim shore
The tidings to Glenorchy bore,
That you in fight had died.”

“ Now, loose your grasp, old friend ! ” said he,
“ Shall I have blood and breath,
And this base traitor boast of life,
Whose craft would bring my wedded wife
To sorrow worse than death ? ”

“Nay, nay,” said she, “be ruled by me,
And go not forth to-night ;
Ye would but scare the wolf away,
Who will not swoop upon his prey
Within the shepherd’s sight.”

The guests were met, the castle rang
With mirth and minstrel tune,
Wide gaped the gates, and out and in
The vassals swarmed with blithesome din,
As of a hive in June.

The beggar man leant on his staff,
And slowly he drew near ;
Then loudly laughed both man and maid,
“Ah cunning knave, you know your trade,
You scent the wedding cheer !

“But beggar though you be, to-day
You like a king shall dine,
And you shall carve the roast at will,
And you, to pledge the bride, shall fill
A bumper draught of wine.”

“I give you thanks,” the beggar cried,
“I will not drink your wine,
Unless your lady bride fill up
The brimming draught, and give the cup
From her own hand to mine.”

Round ran the laugh—“This is the prince
Of saucy beggar knaves !
But every jest shall pass to-day,
Let some one to our lady say
What boon the beggar craves.”

Down stept the lady to the hall,
And filled a cup with wine ;
“ You are too bold,” she said, and laughed,
“ But take the boon, and drink your draught,
And pledge to me and mine.”

—“ To you and yours, O lady dear,
I pledge with all my soul,
May this bright day a blessing bring !”—
And as he drank, he dropt a ring
Within the brimming bowl.

“ What means this prank,” the lady cried,
“ Strange carle, so bold and free ? ”

—“ Oh take the ring, my jest it is,
For such a brimming cup as this
To leave therein a fee ! ”—

She took the cup, she took the ring,
And smiled with right good grace ;
But, as it glittered in her sight,
Oh quickly changed the red to white
Upon her startled face !

—“ Away, the bridegroom and the priest,
The wassail and the wine !
No faith to-day to man I plight,
The dead forbids the marriage rite,
The grave has sent a sign ! ”—

“ Not so,” out spake that beggar bold,
“ Let all but one rejoice,
Let flagons foam anew with wine,
For if the grave has sent a sign,
It likewise sends a voice ! ”

Off went the wallet and the gown,
The staff flew through the hall,
He was no more the beggar man,
Sir Colin, chieftain of his clan,
He stood before them all.

Oh quickly to his breast she sank,
As shoots the lark from heaven !
And, ere her lips their plea could frame,
She felt his kiss, and knew her blame
Forgotten and forgiven.

One stern word only then he spoke,
When, proudly gazing round,
He saw the Laird of Auchendrave
Sneak forth in wedding garment brave,
Most like a chidden hound.

“ Ay, go,” he cried, “ forsworn and false,
In peace this hour depart !
No blood to-day these halls shall stain ;
But, when we two shall meet again,
My sword shall cleave your heart.”



DAME JANET'S REVENGE.

In days that saw the Stuart's fated crown
Prosper on one mean brow ; while yet the dawn
Of faith reformed, red with the stormy glare
Of civil slaughter and fanatic fires,
Was dim with clinging shadows, phantom fears,
Mists of the morning, which the darkness hides

And day dissolves ; and witch and devil kept
Infernal sabbath, if not o'er men's graves,
In fancies foul as they ; there lived a knight,
Sir Nevil Blane, of wealth and ancient name,
Who never vexed his heart with cares of state,
Nor e'er was drawn into the dangerous whirl
Of sect or faction—like a lazy pike
That keeps his chosen pool, and there grows fat
On easy ravage, in his own domain
He found his pleasures—ne'er to him the morn
Came burdened with a more momentous care
Than that the ruffling wind should blow aright
Across the salmon pool, or that the scent
Should lie upon the moor, or lest his hawk,
O'er gorged, should wave a listless wing, the while
The heron soared away above the mere.
Nor ever heavier reckoning racked his brain
Than of the quarry, blood-embossed, at eve.
Nor e'er by him a buxom maiden passed
That drew not after her his lingering eye,
Though he was wedded to a mettled dame,
Whose blood was drawn from sires of fierce renown,
To whom affront was as the fiery spark
To the charged mine ; who never sought from man
Forgiveness, nor bestowed it ; on whose shield
The savage boast was blazoned, and enforced
With grim device. She loved him, as he loved
The shaggy wolf-hound, pillowing its snout
Upon his knee, because to her he seemed
Rough, fond, and faithful, and it pleased her well
To know herself the soul of stronger make,
And flutter his slow wit to show her own ;
And thus for many a year in peace they lived.

But weave, howe'er we will, the web of life,
A random shuttle strikes athwart the loom ;
And in the history of every heart
One unforgotten era, one at least,
Stands paramount ; and thus it was with him.
For, hunting with the king beside the Tay,
He saw young Ruthven at the royal ear
Whisper, and watched the idiot wonder grow
Upon the listening face, till from the train
Withdrawing, straight to Perth they rode away.
He with some few unbidden followed hard,
And clattering through the streets of Perth, drew rein
At Gowrie House, and waited for the king ;
Until a cry as from the clouds above
Burst on his ears, and looking up, he saw
A face, that ever after scared his dreams,
The king's—from out a turret window stretch,
Purple with blood, and wild with maniac fear,
And writhe itself half-free from a fierce hand
That clutched the throat, with shout of Treason ! Help !
Then rushing in with Ramsay and with Mar
Through Gowrie's heart he sent a timely thrust.
For this good service, when the king made choice
Of such as should attend his pilgrimage
To that fair promised land beyond the Tweed,
He named Sir Nevil Blane ; who in his heart
Cursed the officious courtesy, and loathed
To prance in chains, and case his mighty limbs
In buckram of the court ; but ne'er the less
Made answer in delighted, duteous phrase.

Short time before, it chanced Dame Janet took
A maiden to her service, Agnes Hay ;

In feature and in form the very foil
To her proud mistress ; slight was she of make,
And low of stature, but of perfect mould ;
Perfect as is one peerless blossom found
Among its sister flowers ; with shy sweet eyes
Demure and dark, which upward sent at times
A ray aslant like morning's earliest beam.
Some time Sir Nevil gloated o'er her charms
With covert eyes, then found or made a chance
To hazard some sweet whispers, unproved ;
Thereafter ventured with familiar hand
To toss her glossy tresses, and laughed down
The pretty passion feigned, as when beneath
A fondling touch the palfrey shakes its mane :
Until such snatches of sweet dalliance grew
To guilty passion, gathering every hour
A fiercer glow beneath the veiling shame,
Like smouldering flames that whiten at the core ;
And spiced with dread as with a maddening drug :
For ever o'er them, like a brooding wrath,
Unearthly, unappeasable, they felt
The proud unconscious presence of the wife,
Blind to the shame all eyes but hers beheld.
For winks and nods began ere long to pass
Among the menial throng, and the rank jest,
With sly side glances, set the grooms aroar ;
While serving women tossed a virtuous chin.

At length the day came, when Sir Nevil Blane
Bestrode his steed, caparisoned to swell
The pompous poverty of Holyrood ;
And riding from the courtyard waved adieu
To her, whose lawful kiss had touched his lips ;

And saw a little hand, a fair false hand,
Twinkle a moment like the swallow's breast,
Within a shadowed nook high in the tower.

That eve Dame Janet far too proud to seem
Disconsolate, yet restless in her heart,
Roamed through the castle, purposeless, as oft
Betides when from the vacant hall is missed
Some dear familiar presence, and threw wide
A door that stood ajar, and with one glance
Saw Agnes Hay stand with a trinket held
Against her sparkling eyes, and start and hide
The glittering toy in fluttered haste within
The unlaced bosom, whence it came—what then !
Such tremor well becomes the bashful maid,
Surprised within the shrine, where she unveils
Love's sacred symbols for adoring gaze.
Ay ! but that trinket well Dame Janet knew,
And knew, that from no hand on earth but one
It could have passed to hers. Backward she drew
With every vein a river, running flame,
And like those secret characters, that lie
On the drugged scroll unseen, but start to light
And meaning, held against the radiant fire,
A thousand incidents, that slipped away
Unnoticed in the past, swarmed swiftly back,
And flashed into significance, and wove,
Together linked, a chain of flaring proof.
No word she spoke, but, gliding swiftly, came
To her own chamber, and upon her hand
Cushioned her brow, and without sign or start
Stood patient, till the outraged womanhood
Within her bosom ceased to flutter more ;

Then bade a female underling attend,
And with one stern, straight, shattering question tore
From her scared lips the truth ; nor spared herself
One lacerating touch, but heard the tale,
Still darker than her dread, from end to end.

Meanwhile the guilty handmaid, Agnes Hay,
Sat in her chamber, reasoning with her fears,
And on her troubled fancy strove to fix
The apparition of the lady's face,
And sift its meaning ; and one moment sank,
Drowning in gulfs of terror, and the next,
Rebuked the foolish tremor—when she heard
A swift foot in the corridor, and saw
Her mistress stand before her, terrible
As death to helpless sleepers, whose dazed eyes
The torch of murder startles—heard her hiss
“ That bauble, strumpet ! lest I tear it forth
With the vile heart beneath it ! ” From her hand
The lady snatched the trinket, meekly given,
Gazed, glared upon it, dashed it to the floor,
And ground it underfoot ; and as a snake
Towering with cruel glittering eyes above
Its prey, she bent above the girl, who sank
With one low cry for mercy at her feet,
And spoke, “ Writhe, as thou should'st, thou painted
worm !

That, gnawing at the root of wedded love
Hast blasted it for ever, and hast left
Upon thy track the slimy smear of shame—
Defilement less to be endured than death.
Were I to crush thy life out, and have done,
What vengeance, what amends were that ? swift death

Is heaven's best boon to thousands. Not the fires
Eternal, to the adulteress assured,
I trust, no, not to unconsuming flame ;
But flame, that from thine eyes shall burn the light,
And from thy cheek the bloom, and shrivel up
Thy soft enticing curls, and leave thy flesh
A rotting blackness—and not that, until
All shame shall sting, if shame can sting thee still,
All terrors, tortures, wilder than thy dreams,
Have wrung life's latest comfort from thy soul."

Therewith she stormed away, and that same hour
Stern hands bore Agnes Hay to prison ward
And bound her arms with cruel fetters, lest
The exaltation of despair should nerve
Her hand against her life, and cheat the doom
Of human justice ; there long time she lay,
Bowed with the burden of her misery ;
Until they loosed her bonds, and led her forth
One day, before a circle of grave brows
And stony eyes ; of whom were some, who wore
The livery of mercy, ministers
Of infinite compassion, yet beneath
Whose sacred robes there trembled not one pulse
Of natural pity, as the wan scared face,
With dumb, yet questioning appeal, looked round
Upon them. One drew forth a written scroll
And read aloud—"Ye stand here, Agnes Hay,
Delated and accused of devilish arts
And deadly practices against the life
And honour of the lady, Janet Blane.
For that, with Satan leagued, to whom your soul
Is sold for power to work your hellish will,

With witchcraft, sorceries, and enchantments foul,
Ye have abused the knight, her spouse, and cast
Your glamour o'er him, and with magic drugs
So wrought upon his frame, that he forsook
His wedded plight, and gave himself to you,
Blind with the blood's base phrenzy for a time,
Besotted by your charm—and more, that ye,
In furtherance of your accurst design,
With subtle poison did anoint the robe
Worn by your mistress, which into her blood
Crept, burning like a slow fire, night and day,
Unquenchable, and withering her life ;
That ye, from check or menace free, might sate
Your heart with sin. What say ye, Agnes Hay ?
Will ye confess ye are a witch, or brook
The wrench of law's dread instruments that wring
The truth from stubborn lips ?” “ Alas !” she cried,
“ I am undone, undone,—for now I read
The riddle of those dark and awful words
My mistress spoke. Would God she had been driven
To slay me at her feet ! for now I know
Her hate as pitiless as fire or storm ;
And know that not alone these frail limbs crushed,
Or in the flames consuming, will appease
Her wrath, but she will seek to blast my soul,
That yet for all might hope to be forgiven ;
And madden me with horror, till my lips
Blaspheme despairing. Yet will I speak out
The truth—I do confess that I have sinned,
But not beyond my nature ; I have done
My lady grievous wrong, for which I well
Deserve to die, with whatsoever pains
The law decrees—nor will I speak of him

Who shared my sin, but leave to Heaven to judge
Between the tempter and the tempted. But,
Of what ye further charge me, I deny
All knowledge, all design—oh let the truth
Suffice, since that will crush me, and seek not
To wring from madness more ; lest ye offend
The eternal pity, whose lost child I am !”

Sternly they heard, and sternly spoke—“ Ye are
As false and obdurate as ye are vile,
And as fair-spoken as the subtle fiend
Ye serve ; but God and man alike cry out
To rid the land of that accursed tribe,
Apostates from their nature, who have ta'en
The devil's bribe, and wear his secret badge,
And in his ranks enlisting, are equipped
From hell's black armoury, to wound and blast
And sap men's lives unseen—and therefore we
Not weakly striking in the dark, must learn
The adversary's arms, assaults, and snares ;
And drag the guilty knowledge from the heart,
Where it lies hidden, by such strenuous modes
As law appoints and wisdom has approved.
And first, for our assurance, let them search
Her body for the devil's mark, the brand
With which he stamps his flock. Call John Kincaid !”

Quick to the summons from the doorway came
The pricker, through whose little twinkling eyes
A brute soul leered ; with him one wrinkled wretch,
A withered husk of womanhood, that once
Had bloomed in flower and fruit. But Agnes Hay,
Soon as her ears had caught the dreaded name,

Cowered like a helpless creature, caged beside
A sleeping tiger, when it sees him stir ;
And wailed and shrieked, " Oh spare me this, and rack
My limbs with your worst torment ! Think me not
So steeped in sin that natural shame is drowned
Within my heart." They answered, " We are bound
To our strict office, and the law provides
A witness of your sex, this matron grave,
That wrong or scandal may not soil the robe
Of justice ; but on us lays no command
To be onlookers, therefore we retire."

That night Dame Janet, pillowed on her couch,
Sick with the fever of a grief, that fed
A flame upon her cheek, bade that she-wolf
Of torture sit by her and tell the tale.
As one, who dallies with a precious draught,
Some rare and rich elixir of the vine,
And tries its tints in every light, and breathes
Its fragrance with long sighs, and slowly sips,
Lest one drop pass unrifled of its zest,
She gloated o'er the picture, as it grew
Distinct upon her fancy, loth to lose
One shade or glimmer of the hues it wore ;
And listening with dilated eyes and lips
Firm-set, heard how the maiden raved and writhed,
And, spurring like a new-caught falcon, tore
The villain strength, that held her, till she swooned.
And when she heard how after search they found
A rose-red freckle underneath the breast,
And thrust therein the long sharp slender steel,
That woke no quiver, drew not one red bead
Of blood, from that hell-blasted spot of flesh,

Her fingers, fiercely clutching, seemed to twine
Around a dagger hilt ; but when the crone,
Grown garrulous and unwary, chuckling spoke
Of the fair form disrobed, Dame Janet sprang
To her full stature, hurling from her lips,
“ The graces of the harlot ! and to me !
Away ! lest at my feet I strike thee dead.”

Once more, nor long thereafter, Agnes Hay
Arraigned before her judges stood forlorn,
And shuddered in the winter of their eyes ;
And one address her, “ Clear it is to us,
Who have not spared to pray for light, that ye
Are one of Satan’s flock, and have received
The kiss, the baptism, and the burning seal
Of your infernal master, which in vain
Ye strove to hide. Now partly that ye are
Yet young and tender, partly that we deem
All other proofs superfluous,—as, to bind
Your limbs close-twisted to your seat, and watch
The room, at door and window fast, until
Your starving imps, like gnat or spider creep
Through chink or keyhole to your breast for food ;
Or to have plunged you in the river pool
Bound hand and foot, there let you sink or swim—
We spare you them, and pass at once to what
Is final ; and once more we do beseech
That ye, for your soul’s sake and for the praise
Of justice, make confession of the truth.
Or, look on these, whose office is to search
The heart with torture ! Think how ye will bear
The engine’s harrowing gripe, that grinds the bone,
And crushes from the limbs a dew of blood ? ”

“Urge me no more,” she cried, “vile though I be,
Ye are as far from heaven as I, who seek
To shut my soul from hope, and send it, foul
With the fresh stain of falsehood, to its judge,
That your dark pride may triumph—but ye shoot
Beyond your mark, for in this wretched heart
Forlorn and dark, ye kindle one bright ray
Of comfort ; for I trust that I shall die,
No righteous sacrifice to justice, but
The martyr of your malice. Do with me
Even as you will, I answer you no more.
And if my nature, sickening in the thrill
Of torment, utter more or worse, I here
Protest to heaven, it shall be wholly false.”

That day Dame Janet, pacing through the room,
Oft paused and listened, till at length she heard
The tread of those whose tidings were the dream
Of her fierce thirst. They entered, three grave men,
Judge, minister, and notary, and the three
As with one voice cried out, “She hath confessed.”
“Confessed !” the lady echoed, “how ! and what ?”
And thus the glib-tongued judge alone began :
“We found her stubborn, breathing bitter scorn
And desperate in denial, sparing not
To slander our high office and ourselves :
As one whom Satan, shadowing with his wing,
Assures, and hides heaven’s angels weeping near ;
And therefore it seemed good, for her soul’s health
To purge it from its black unholy load
With torture’s bitter medicine. Will you hear
The manner of it ?” “Speak,” the lady said,
“Till I require your silence.”

“First we gave
 Command to torture gently, and they bound
 Her feet fast in the stocks, and bared her limbs
 Beneath the knee, and laid thereon thick bars
 Of sharp-edged iron, one by one, until
 They bit into the bone.” “How looked she then?”
 Dame Janet asked.—“A sight enough to shake
 All hearts, but those by sternest duty steeled.
 The flush and pallor followed on her cheek,
 Like hues that on the wind-blow willow change;
 And ever and anon the tightening spasm
 Dissolved in one long sigh, and on her brow
 A burning dew sprang, gathering to the tears
 Her eyes refused, and loudly though we prayed
 That Satan’s hold might be unloosed, and she
 Spring to the arms of mercy from the foe
 Of her salvation, still the utmost stress
 Of torment wrung from her no word or sign
 Save one long moan, that sharpened to a shriek
 As life sank overborne.”

“How!” cried the dame,
 “Dead? clumsy manglers, slipped from your coarse
 hands?”

—“Not dead, but drowned in a long swoon she lay,
 And, waking, looked around with such wild eyes
 As phrenzy kindles, where the dumb fiend glared
 In mocking malice. Vainly then we strove
 To move her heart to penitence, but she,
 Who had been fire to our rebuke, was stone
 To our persuasion; therefore were we driven
 To sterner proof, lest Satan should prevail.
 And we bethought us then of Dame Euphane,

And how the cord, close-twisted round her brow,
Unloosed the devil's bond, whereon she spoke,
Unfolding that dark league, accurst and strange
With foul solemnities, against the life
Of our dread sovereign, and the fiend's worst foe.
'Therefore we bade a thong be brought, and bound
Around her brow, but even while yet its clasp
No closer than a velvet fillet prest,
An anguish shook her, and she cried aloud
"Have mercy, mercy! I will show you all."
Whereon we gave heaven thanks, that she had found
Grace at the last to testify the truth,
And disappoint the snarer of her soul.
Then, at her wish, the rest withdrawing, we
Remained with her, and heard her frankly make
Confession, which in legal form we have
Recorded here." "Read!" said the dame, and thus
The notary read:

—"Ay, write me down a witch!
The blackest of hell's midnight daughters, write
That for my crimes, I merit to be torn
Asunder by wild horses—but I was
The fairest witch of all, and I was chosen
The Maiden of the Covine, and Black John,
Know ye not him, our master, danced with me
And with none other, on North Berwick Law,
From midnight till the shrill cock's scaring crow
Rang through the misty morn. How the bleared eyes
Of all the wrinkled sisters leered with spite!

"Ay! but I have not told you how at first
He whispered in my heart, and to my side
Came like a gallant gentleman, and laid

Soft touches on my head, and brought me gold,
And I consented to be his, and gave
My bond in blood. Alas ! I gave him all.

“ But was it not a joy to ride the air,
Hustling the owl and singing as we flew !
Soho ! our steeds are swift and good
That ne'er at rack or manger stood,
On corn or bean stalk, rush or broom,
We mount, and gallop through the gloom.
When the fox his den forsakes,
When the vermin's hunger wakes,
When the fangs of mischief bite,
When the poison-vapours blight,
Through the chimney like a spark
Up we shoot into the dark.
Sister, sister ! spur and switch !
Faster, faster !
Lest the master
Lash with snakes the laggard witch.

“ Then for our sport from out the green hill swarmed
Eft, newt, and toad with slimy speckled heads,
And puckered lips and shining lidless eyes,
And on their hind legs danced before their lord.

“ Ay, and one night we had a merry jest,
When Bessie Gray came late from Lammerlaw,
With skirts bedraggled and bemired. ‘ How now ! ’
The Master cried. ‘ Have ye been through the pond ? ’
‘ Nay,’ said she, but as I came sailing o'er
An Abbey by the Tyne, the midnight chant
Rose through the air, and struck me like a blight,

And down into the deepest pool of Tyne
I tumbled like a crow with wounded wing,
And cursed the chance, yet blest my luck withal,
That the witch-loathing water lay beneath,
And like a water rat I swam to shore."

"Stay," said Dame Janet, "had it not been well
To question her, and guide her tongue, that seems
Too much to ramble."—"Madam, so we did,
But took the offered firstlings of the heart
Before we taxed it."—"Has she not confessed
The crimes laid to her charge?"—"Yea, and much more;
Of which the tenor is, that she being taught
By the arch-fiend himself, prepared a charm,
Whose potency was such as to procure
For her the fruit of land and sea, the yield
Of bird and beast, man's love, her heart's worst will
Upon her foes; and she being fair without,
But fierce and foul within, did lay on you
A blasting spell, and with bewitching snare
Entangled your unwary spouse."—"Enough!"
Dame Janet cried, "I care not to hear more.
What sentence is decreed?"—"That she be burned
Alive to-morrow on the village green—
No lighter doom our conscience durst allow."
—"So soon! nay, for her soul's sake, let her live
A little longer!"—"That shall be," they said,
"As you desire."—She answered, "Let her die
Upon the third day hence," and thereupon
Dismissed them with a gracious shower of thanks.

Next morn Dame Janet, with one trusted squire,
Mounted and rode away to meet her lord,

Who halted for her coming by the Tweed ;
And governing every wild pulse in her heart,
She clothed her brow with masking smiles, and wore
The rose of joyous welcome on her cheek,
And shrank not from the kiss, no longer dear.

Homeward they rode, and still his restless thoughts
Outran his speed, and ever and again
He asked of Bran, his hound, and the grey colt
New broken to the saddle, and if yet
The moulting falcon had regained her plumes,
And skirmished near the one distressful care
With some light questions hazarded, but roused
No ambushed wrath, and dreamt that all was well—
Until they saw the towers of Castle Blane
Above the trees beyond the village green ;
And saw upon the green a great fire blaze
And shed its pitchy plumes upon the breeze,
Ringed with a staring crowd. “ How,” cried the knight,
“ A bonfire, kindled for their lord’s return ! ”
“ Ride on and see ! ” she said. Together both
Pressed on and pierced the throng, till on their face
The glowing air burned like a furnace breath ;
And, as it chanced, a breeze that moment blew,
And parting wide the enfolding flame, unveiled
The shrivelling semblance of a human form ;
And one coarse hind, that saw the knight’s wild stare
Of questioning amazement, shouted loud,
“ ’Tis Agnes Hay, we burned her for a witch.”

Sir Nevil turned his gaze upon his wife
And saw the triumph glitter in her eyes,
And shape upon her lips a sneer malign ;

And asked no more, and needed not to ask.
 But once at length, exalted in its ire,
 His nature towered o'er hers, and thus he spoke :
 " This then is your revenge ! you answer not !
 Answer it then to heaven, that yet shall judge
 Between us three, all guilty ! I, as man
 Have sinned indeed, but as a devil, you.
 Well have you played your game, and triumphed. Now
 We two are quits, and henceforth nevermore
 Shall one roof cover both of us. Farewell."

DAME JANET'S REVENGE.—" The Reformers, although rejecting the miracles of the Catholic Church, retained with tenacity the belief of the existence of such sorceresses (as the witch of scripture), and zealously enforced the penalties against all unfortunate creatures whom they believed to fall under the description of witches, wizards, or the like."—*Scott's Tales of a Grandfather*.

" *The boots, the caspieclaws, and the pilniewinks*, engines for torturing the legs, the arms, and the fingers, were applied to either sex ; and that with such violence, that sometimes the blood would have spouted from the limbs ; loading with heavy irons, and whipping with cords, till the skin and flesh were torn from the bones, have also been the adopted methods of torment."—*Arnot's Criminal Trials*.

" In one case, we are informed by Mackenzie, a poor girl was to die for witchcraft, of whom the real crime was, that she had attracted too great a share, in the lady's opinion, of the attention of the laird."—*Scott's Demonology*.

" Our ancient Scottish divines . . . entered into war with the kingdom of Satan, as the crusaders of old invaded the land of Palestine, with the same confidence in the justice of their cause, and similar indifference concerning the feelings of those whom they accounted the enemies of God and man."—*Scott's Demonology*.

" And the said irons being of new, upon her faithful promise, removed, she then desired my Lord of Eglintoune, the said four justices, and the said Mr. David Dickson, minister of the burgh, Mr. George Dunbar, minister of Ayr, and Mr. Mitchell Wallace, minister of Kilmarnock, and Mr. John Cunninghame, minister of Dalry, and Hugh Kennedy, provost of Ayr, to come by themselves, and to remove all others, and

she should declare truly, as she should answer to God, the whole matter. Whose desire in this being fulfilled, she made her confession in this manner, but (*i.e.* without) any kind of demand, freely, without interrogation; God's name by earnest prayer being called upon for opening of her lips, and easing of her heart, that she by rendering of the truth, might glorify and magnify his holy name, and disappoint the enemy of her salvation."—*Trial of Margaret Barclay, &c., 1618.*

"The magistrates and ministers of Dalkeith caused John Kincaid of Tranent, the common pricker, to exercise his craft upon her, who found two marks of what he called the devil's making, and which appeared indeed to be so, for she could not feel the pin when it was put into either of the said marks, nor did they (the marks) bleed when they were taken out again. They were pins of three inches in length."—*Trial of Janet Peaston.*

"The witches of Auldearn were so numerous that they were told off into squads, or *Covines*, to each of which were appointed two officers. One of these was called the Maiden of the Covine."—*Scott's Demonology.*

THE SAILOR'S BRIDE.

THEY call me mad, and there are times,
When from my heart the sorrow climbs
Like tempest to my brain;
And, when the blinding shadows part,
Strange terrors hang about my heart,
Like haunting dreams of pain.

I was a sailor's plighted bride;
My life was bright with joy and pride,
For he had promised me,
When last we parted on the shore,
To wed me, when the cruise was o'er,
And bid adieu to sea.

One night, the blackest night on earth,
The last to me of peace and mirth,
 A tempest shook the roof ;
All night, from slumber scared, I lay,
And heard the breaker in the bay,
 The roaring blast aloof.

The tempest with the darkness fled ;
The cloudy fragments, rent and red,
 Like banners soiled in blood,
The last of a retreating foe,
Flew far before the kindling glow,
 That brightened land and flood.

The lark sang in the cloudless skies,
The flowers looked up, like streaming eyes
 That smile when tears are past ;
But still the sea with sullen roar
Rolled angrily on reef and shore,
 Resentful of the blast.

At morn I walked along the sand,
And saw the people crowd the strand,
 To watch the drifting wreck ;
For all agreed, that in the wave
A ship that night had found a grave,
 With every soul on deck.

With hasty feet I paced the shore,
While at my heart lay sharp and sore
 A dagger point of fear ;
I walked with steps that could not tire,
My limbs were filled with restless fire,
 My brain with bodings drear.

Slow as a wild beast, scared away
By hunters from its mangled prey,
Ere half its meal be o'er,
That turns and crouches as it goes,
And flings its foam against its foes,
The sea ebbd from the shore.

I tracked the waves' receding edge
By slippery ware and rocky ledge
And oozing salt sea streams ;
For something urged me onward still,
Against my thought, against my will,
Like one, who walks in dreams.

And still the white foam's ebbing flow
Seemed like a shroud uplifted slow
From a beloved head—
No more I know—a withering pain
Passed like a blaze across my brain,
Then all was dark and dead.

They found me where I lay at rest,
Pillowed upon my love's cold breast—
They tore my arms away—
No wonder that the sorrow climbs
And maddens in my brain at times,
As tempest drowns the day.



DROWNED AT SEA.

No hallowed earth entombs thy head,
No friend or brother rests with thee,
No mourner weeps above thy bed
In the deep sea.

Fast flew the ship, when one wild crest
Curled, crashed, and foamed o'er deck and spar,
And bore thee, buried in its breast,
Alone and far.

As when the lion makes his leap
Upon the flock, and singles one ;
So wert thou hurried to the deep,
Where help was none.

No loving fingers, lightly prest,
With reverent care thine eyelids closed,
And round thy limbs the pallid vest
Of death disposed.

No tended flowers thy grave shall wreath,
No pious scroll thy record show,
No Sabbath bells a blessing breathe,
Where thou liest low.

Yet, weltering in the briny spray,
Or shrouded in the sea-ware's fold,
As soundly shalt thou sleep as they
In churchyard mould.

SHETLAND.

THE parting signal southward flows—
Stern rampart of the north, farewell !
Farewell, the skerries and the voes,
The cliffs, that with the thunder dwell !
The torrent tide, the raging roost,* .
The cairn upon the lonely shore,
The footmarks of the fiery host,
That swore by Odin and by Thor !

No woodland wreathes thy brows austere,
No meadow waves with rippling corn,
No voice of song salutes the ear
From leafy perch at eve or morn.
Yet thine the might of mountain steep,
And purple robes on mountain sides,
And thine the strain that never sleeps,
The thunder of Atlantic tides.

Nor yet of joyous life bereft,
Thy billows roll, thy mountains soar,
For myriad wings, from crag and cleft,
Swarm forth to whiten sea and shore.
In airy curves the seamew flits,
The gannet like an arrow falls,
And swart and grim the cormorant sits
On jagged reefs and rocky walls.

* Roost—the race or current of the tide ; where it breaks into a dangerous surf.

Nor ever dost thou dimly fold
The cloud around thy brows, and hear
The surge on cliff and cavern rolled,
And frown upon the darkening year.
Calm hours are thine—majestic peace,
The graces of a stern repose,
The grateful breath of glad release,
When the north sleeps amid its snows.

CONSCIENCE.

STERN warder of the bosom, still
Keep watch upon my wayward will ;
Cease not to murmur and molest,
Though I should curse thee from my breast.

When folly wreathes the festive hours,
Strike like a serpent through the flowers ;
When pleasure's baneful cup is quaffed,
Be gall and wormwood in the draught.

When reason, drugged with joy or jest,
Is false or dim within the breast,
Like lightning on its slumber gleam,
Like boding thunder break the dream. -

Be thou the sting of sleepless thought,
Be thou the dream, with import fraught,
Be thou the mate of idle moods,
And haunt my step in solitudes.

Be thou a presence, intertwined
With every impulse of the mind ;
Till thou become within my breast
Light, law, and happiness, and rest.

For sweeter far than praise or fame,
Or any sound that lips can frame,
And past the power of hell to mar,
Thy low delighted whispers are.

THE CONQUEST.

ART thou a soldier, in the brunt
Of battle foremost, on whose front
The toils and hazards of the wars
Are registered in glorious scars ?

A sailor, bronzed on every tide
Where'er the furrowing keel may glide,
Who, wrapt in hurricane and cloud,
Hast never shrunk by helm or shroud ?

A hunter thou, whose soul demands
The savage spoils of lonely lands,
Who in the lion's path hast lain,
And set thy foot upon his mane ?

I tell thee of a fiercer war,
An hour more perilous by far,
When skill and valour shall not serve,
Nor point of steel, nor brawny nerve.

When conscience, slumbering in the heart,
Breaks from its torpor with a start,

And makes for heaven one rally more,
The last perchance in mercy's store ;

When passions first in vain desire,
When thought is storm, and blood is fire,
When tides of pleasure, smooth and fair,
Break up to gulfs of gloom and glare ;

When perished purities return
From out their long dishonoured urn,
The loves of childhood, that revive,
Once more to plead, once more to strive.

Oh ! well for him, to whom, that hour,
The unseen love is light and power,
Who, bravely battling, wins at length
Not only victory, but strength.

A conquered realm, a captive host
Are trophies that a king may boast ;
But routed passions, bridled will,
I hold a nobler triumph still.



A NIGHT THOUGHT.

THE scarf of twilight cloud is blown
Apart, and like an Indian queen,
Whose dusk brown burns with diamond sheen,
The night moves to her silent throne.

A slender curve of burnished gold
Above the purple ridges dark,
The new moon floats, lone as the ark
Upon the shoreless sea of old.

And in her wake, one glorious star
Glows like a devotee's tranced eye,
Who, smit with reverence, draws not nigh,
But loves and worships from afar.

And as I gaze, a thought will rise,
That shadows all my eyes behold—
A thought, that takes its hue and mould
From that old page, divinely wise.

Those shining orbs, that star the gloom,
Can they, too, fellow tribes of space,
Share with our earth and all its race,
One general life, one general doom?

Shall they, in some dread hour to be,
In fiery ruin headlong shoot,
Fall like a shower of golden fruit,
When autumn shakes the laden tree?

Shall chaos in its hideous maw
All glorious effluences quench,
One final wrath asunder wrench
The bonds of universal law?

Oh ! rather deem this earthly star
The Cain of worlds, accurst alone,
That wanders space, with weary moan,
And brow, that bears the branding scar.

Yea, better far, though sad, to trust
That misery has no other home
In all yon dark mysterious dome,
But clings alone to mortal dust.

To trust that wrath shall cease to burn,
That tears and exile yet shall cease,
And to the fold of love and peace
The wanderer shall again return.

STARS.

As one with finger on his sealed lips laid,
Adjured to silence, in whose brimming eyes
A message of mysterious import lies,
A secret, that would gladly be betrayed,
Ye seem to me, Heaven's myriad eyes intense,
Quick-throbbing fires, that crowd the uncurtained sky !
Trembling with your o'erburdening mystery,
Inexorably mute to mortal sense,
Voiceless, until the hand no man may see
Shall give the sign, and silence like a chain
Unloosed shall fall, dissolving in the strain
Of thunder choirs, that shout in jubilee,
And with adoring harmonies rehearse
All secrets of the silent universe.

EVENING.

ONE star is trembling into light,
And hovers like a single spy,
Ere mustering manifold and bright,
Embattled splendours crowd the sky.

No more the merle exalts his theme,
No longer booms the vagrant bee,

And silence now betrays the stream
That whispers to the alder tree.

With perfumed breath, the enamoured air
Broods o'er the blossomed summer bowers,
And showers like one too rich for care
Her jewels on the folded flowers.

And like a lullaby to rest
Is every sound that breaks the calm ;
All is at peace except this breast,
That needs the most its soothing balm.

STANZAS.

THE sapless leaves most lightly dance,
The shallow streamlet laughs in spray,
The worthless warblers of the wood
Will twitter, twitter all the day.

So vacant heart and barren brow
Are ever blithest in the crowd,
And bustle, big with petty cares,
And carol under every cloud.

Oh better, if this world were all,
And daily bread our utmost need,
To pluck all pity from the breast,
All sighs from out the breath to weed.

To shut to misery's pleading voice
Like prison gates the callous ears,
And wear the supercilious eye,
That never is surprised to tears.

Oh better, were no prize to win,
But that for which the wordlings press,
To strip the spirit for the strife
From every trammeling tenderness !

Even as the wrestler in the ring,
Who will his utmost strength essay,
Flings from his limbs their cumbrous garb,
That joints and thews may freely play.

THE WOMAN SLAYER.

ONE wild moment linger o'er her,
Not as once, a rapt adorer,
Call her, bid her wake, implore her
For a word, a look—in vain !
Vain to rave remorseful prayer !
Thou, her tempter and betrayer,
Now her crimson-handed slayer,
Art accursed more than Cain.

Never more shall love illumine
At thy sight the face of woman,
Never shall that hand inhuman
Round another warmly close ;
For this hour shall seal and sever
Thee from fellowship for ever,
Man's delight and man's endeavour,
Gainful toil and glad repose.

If in haunts of men thou mingle,
Hounding wrath thy track shall single,

And thy heart shall thrill and tingle
At the turning of an eye ;
Then the cup shall cease to gladden,
Mirth shall mock, and whispers madden,
Till from man as from Abaddon
Thou in fear and loathing fly.

Voices in the air shall call thee,
Sound shall startle, silence gall thee,
And the shriek of storms appal thee
Like a last despairing yell ;
Yet though heaven in indignation
Flame and thunder accusation,
Fiercer than all reprobation
In thy heart shall rage a hell.



THE SYREN'S SONG.

I TRIMMED my bark at early morn,
And gaily pushed from shore ;
In haze of gold the land of hope
Lay glimmering far before.

“ Blow swift and strong, O breeze,” I sang,
And swell my rushing sail !
My hand shall rule the helm aright,
My heart shall never fail.

My flag shall flutter in the breath
Of many a spicy land,
My keel on glorious shores afar
Shall grate the golden sand.

And there I'll freight my roving bark
With richest merchandise,
And there I'll drag from sunless deeps
The pearls of costly price.

Though there in cloud and storm arise
The lonely peaks of fame,
And round their scarred and blasted brows
Wave swords of warning flame.

Though on the cliff the harpies sit
With talons, dripping gore,
And ribs of wreck and bones of men
Strew many a deadly shore.

Though there the whirlpool, spinning smooth,
Suck in the careless sail—
My hand shall rule the helm aright,
My heart shall never fail.

So swiftly sped my rushing sail,
Fanned by the gale of spring ;
But, as by one fair isle I flew,
I heard a syren sing.

Oh ! sweet as love, when love is young,
As life, reprieved from death,
The music floated o'er the sea
Like an enchanted breath.

My dizzy spirit drank the bliss,
I flung the helm aside ;
The swerving prow, the shivering sail
Swung idly on the tide.

I saw no more the land of hope,
Heard nought but that wild song,
That wove a charm around my soul,
And drew my bark along ;

And dashed it on a dismal shore,
Bleached white with human bones ;
And, changing, rung around the wreck
In mirth and mocking tones.

Oh ye, who on life's voyage launch
With spirit bright and strong,
Beware that fair isle's fatal shore !
Beware the syren's song !

THE AULD APPLE TREE.

OH Mary ! mind ye when frae schule wi' lightsome feet
we flew

To delve in our wee gardens, when the gowan clad
the lea,

Owre young to woo, but not to love—nae speeches saft
I knew,

But I carved your name and mine upon the auld
apple tree.

And mind ye still, my Mary, that simmer e'en langsyne,
When we left the dancers in the hall, the music and
the glee,

And we plighted vows o' love, and your hand was
clasped in mine,

Where the blossoms fell upon us from the auld apple
tree.

Ah ! many a simmer, Mary, since then has come and
gane,
Bringing blossoms to the garden, bringing bairnies
to our knee ;
But the bairns and blossoms faded, and left us twa alane,
Bare and blighted as the winter leaves the auld apple
tree.

And often yet, my Mary, on many a summer e'en,
The pang gangs through my bosom, and the mist
comes owre my e'e ;
For I hear the bairnies lauchin', as they race upon the
green,
Or climb among the branches o' the auld apple tree.

Our dear wee bairnies, Mary, wee heads o' curly gowd,
Wee hands that clung, wee feet that ran sae fast to
you and me,
Oh, sair it was to cradle them in that cauld coffin shroud,
Lyin' there like withered blossoms o' the auld apple
tree.

Heaven took our best, my Mary, but left us not forlorn,
For the thoughts o' them are dearer far than a' the
world can gie ;
Your eyes are sweet and trustful yet as on our marriage
morn,
And your hand is clasped in mine beneath the auld
apple tree.

Life's gloamin' gathers, Mary, and somewhere in the
gloom
Lies the dark gate that a' maun pass, and death there
keeps the key ;

But there's spring behind the winter, and there's love
beyond the tomb,
And we'll get our blossoms back yet, like the auld
apple tree.

THE FORGET-ME-NOT.

STREAM, that rushest from the hill,
Never weary, never still,
Flashing like a shaken flag
From the ledges of the crag,
Foaming down like amber wine,
From the land of heath and pine,
Reaming in the rocky pool
Frothed with flakes of mantling wool,
Ere thou hurriest to the deep,
Linger where the lilies weep
By thy margin in the lea,
Linger here with them and me,
Tell me, hast thou seen my love
In the ferny glens above,
Among the hills of Dee ?

If no dream beguiled my ear,
The mountain stream made answer clear :
“ When the twilight cooled my streams,
Fevered in the noonday gleams,
And the fox-glove's threaded bells
Drooped with dew in wooded dells,
Where the wild dove's gurgled moan
Made a music like my own ;

On my banks a maiden stood,
Smiling in a happy mood.
Never did my bosom bear
Shape or shadow half so fair,
Oh ! that it might not have died
In the mirror of my tide,
Of the flowers I feed with dew
One she gathered, small and blue,
And to me the blossom gave,
Saying, " Bear it on thy wave !
If my true love by thy stream
Stray like me to muse and dream,
And this blossom, sailing by
On thy ripple, meet his eye,
Then his heart will turn to me,
Here among the hills of Dee.
And, behold ! this flower so sweet
I have floated to thy feet,
And, if e'er thou hast forgot,
Hear its voice, Forget-me-not ! "

Gently flow, thou river dear !
Be thy current ever clear !
Never parching summer glare
Lay thy pebbly channel bare !
Never rushing winter rain
Hurl thee redly o'er the plain !
Be thy meeting with the tide
Like a bridegroom's with his bride !
And green thy ferny fountain be
Among the hills of Dee !

THE DEATH-BED.

THE struggle is over at last ;
The doubt and the terror are past ;
And the shadow we gazed at aghast,
Creeping nearer relentlessly fast,
Lies blacker than night on a desolate hearth,
And darkens the eyes that were dearest on earth.

Wildly the grief would have leapt
To our lips, as our sad watch we kept ;
And only when thinking she slept,
In silence we bitterly wept,
And only when she lay for ever at rest,
The storm of our grief burst aloud from the
breast.

We closed her dim eyes from our sight,
But still, on her face cold and white,
The smile of a happy good-night
Remained like a lingering light ;
And we whispered, while seeing how calm was
her sleep,
“They sin, who would weep for her,”—still did
we weep.



JESSIE.

THE Lady Alice boasts the blood
Of Norman earls, that crossed the flood ;
She knows each scion of that root
Of which she is the fairest shoot ;
Her lineaments she loves to trace
In many a dimly-pictured face—
My Jessie knows, and knows no more,
That Adam was her ancestor.

The Lady Alice proudly sees
Her hundred vassals vie to please ;
And one with icy stare she chills,
And one with gracious smile she thrills,
And weighs in scales of caution cold
Their lands, their titles, and their gold—
My Jessie's love is mine by stealth,
And love is all our hope and wealth.

The Lady Alice leads the ball
With courtly grace, serene and tall ;
In blaze of gold and satin sheen
Her gauzy robes are scanty screen—
No other light than nature lends,
No other hues than nature blends—
No other grace than heaven has sent—
My Jessie needs for ornament.



FOR MY SAKE.

For my sake—softly on my ear it fell,
But not the trumpet's thrilling call could shake
My soul so strongly—still its echoes dwell
And whisper in my bosom—"for her sake."

With wild words at the time I made reply,
With passionate pleas that she some proof would
 make
Of my unmeasured love—set far or high
Some task of toil or hazard, for her sake.

Brave visions floated in the glowing haze
Of my flushed fancy—with hot lips I spake
Of glorious deeds, crowned with immortal praise,
Of martyr agonies, borne for her sake.

Smiling she spoke—"There are no worlds, alas
To conquer now—no giant's gates to break,
No fiery dragon in the foul morass
To slay in fierce encounter, for my sake.

Far less I ask—and yet far more—beat down
All wild desires, that like the lion make
A desert where they dwell, and seek no crown,
But that which duty offers, for my sake."



TO— IN REVERIE.

SWEET eyes—that till this moment dazzled mine,
What dreamy charm has stolen away your light?
As if a brook of summer, swift and bright,
Should cease at once to ripple and to shine.

One tress of wrinkled gold slips from its band,
And down the bosom unregarded flows ;
The broidered woof, whose lavish fruitage glows
In crimson wool, drops from the heedless hand.

Dear dreamy eyes—break not awhile your trance,
That I may dwell upon each living grace,
As freely as upon a pictured face
Unchecked by the rebuke of your bright glance.

Ah ! might I lift the veil, and catch a gleam
Of that fair inward world, whereon you gaze,
And follow unproved, where fancy strays
Through the pure Eden of a maiden's dream.

Fain would I trust no fond belief beguiles,
That tells me in your dream I hold a place ;
And that it brightens fairer round the face
Of him, who now awaits your dawning smile.



THE BACHELOR'S REVERIE.

O'ER my fancy they flit,
When at twilight I sit,
All alone by a hearth, that is cheerless and chill ;
At midnight they peep
Through the curtain of sleep,
Fair faces, young faces, dear faces still.

Not as phantoms they come
Pale and dreary and dumb,
Wan blossoms of memory, blighted and bleak ;
But with arch winning smiles,
And with maidenly wiles,
And the rush of the heart reddening over the cheek.

Gloss of gold and of jet
On their rich tresses yet,
Sunny light in their eyes like the flash of the streams—
With the freshness and hue
Of the dawn and the dew,
They glimmer and flit through the haze of my dreams.

What boots it to know
That their tresses are snow,
That the rose from the cheek has now withered away,
And that time's dreary plough
Has long furrowed each brow,
Or folded it cold in its covering clay.

But come as they will,
There's a dearest one still

Ever clear through the mist of the manifold years,
With the blue of the skies
In compassionate eyes
Where regret trembles ready to rush into tears.

Ah ! could she hear now
All I feared to avow,
Could I but from the past one small portion retrieve !
Those eyes should not beam
Through the haze of a dream
Nor I sit alone in my chamber at eve.

~~~~~  
1878.

ACROSS the land a shadow lies,  
That quenches in its cold eclipse  
The music of a million lips,  
The light of hope in honest eyes,  
And spectral cares and terrors freeze  
The warm firesides of age and ease.

The wheels of art and toil repose,  
From sullen hands the mattock falls,  
Fair reputation's whited walls  
Their inward rottenness disclose,  
And all the paths of trade and trust  
Heave like a thin volcanic crust.

What matter—up yon frowning steeps,  
By flinty crest and cloudy dome,  
That fence the Afghan's mountain home,

The lion flag of England leaps,  
While echoes, rolling from the fight,  
Speak menace to the Muscovite.

What though from all the troubled land  
A litany of woe resounds,  
And every day the crash astounds  
Of credit, built on shifting sand,  
If we give checkmate to the Czar,  
And rectify a frontier far.

Oh, England !—of your freedom proud,  
Your richest jewel, dearly won,  
Is't wise, is't well to strike at one  
Whose claim—to all but slaves allowed—  
Is—but to choose his friends—no more,  
And keep a padlock on his door.

But he who grasps too far may fall—  
Beware the Nemesis that rolled  
To dust the empire-thrones of old,  
That held the subject world in thrall,  
And struck with restless arm afar  
On frontiers fringed with flames of war.



## HARVEST HYMN.

FATHER in heaven, whose hand unseen  
Has clothed the land with living green,  
And showered the rain on thirsty leas,  
And fanned them with the glowing breeze,  
And daily lifted higher in heaven  
The fire that ripened fruit and ear,  
Thy love we own, Thy power revere,  
In this, and all that Thou hast given.

Within the grave's dark garner laid  
Man's frame to formless dust may fade ;  
And towers and temples overthrown  
May strew the sand in deserts lone ;  
Fire, flood, and famine, frost, and hail  
May blast the hope of field and fold ;  
But Thou hast kept Thy word of old,  
Seed time and harvest shall not fail.

Again Thy promise is fulfilled,  
That cheered the toiler when he tilled ;  
Again the hues of summer fade  
To mellow gold on leaf and blade ;  
And, glowing in the garden bowers,  
The ripening clusters lower hang,  
The life that falls without a pang,  
The simple fare of Eden's hours.

Our Father, though Thy hand no more  
Showers manna through the morning hoar,

No less a miracle this morn  
Has clad the land with fruit and corn ;  
No less the cloud and fire are Thine,  
That lead the year through shade and shine  
Than those, that led through desert sand  
Thy people to the promised land.

Oh ! in Thy love, like light on high,  
The same to all, denied to none,  
May all our petty rancours die  
As darkness dies before the sun !  
May we, the children of one Lord,  
Our common brotherhood revere,  
And beat to pruning-hooks the spear,  
And to the plough-share shape the sword !

THE END.













